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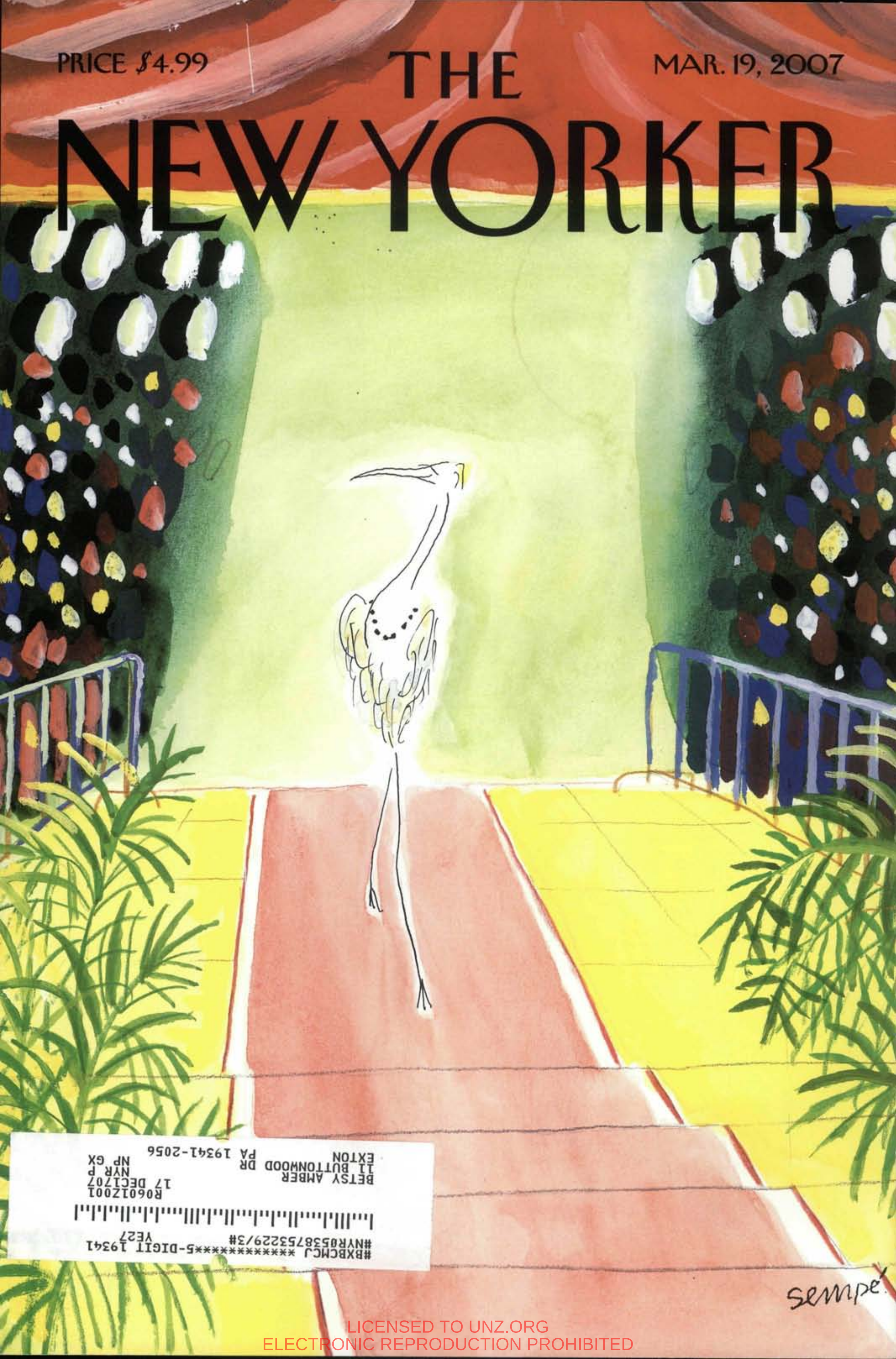

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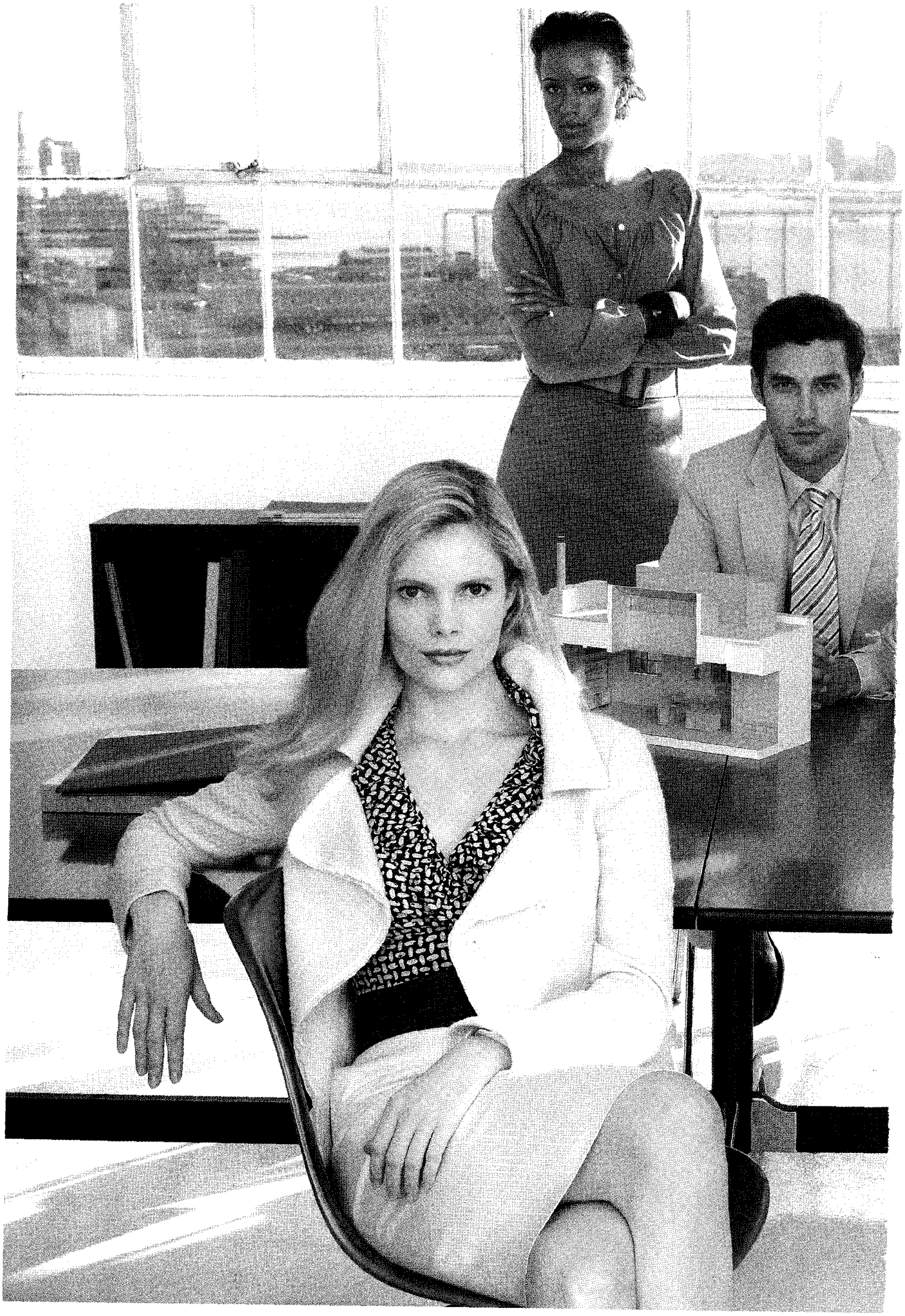

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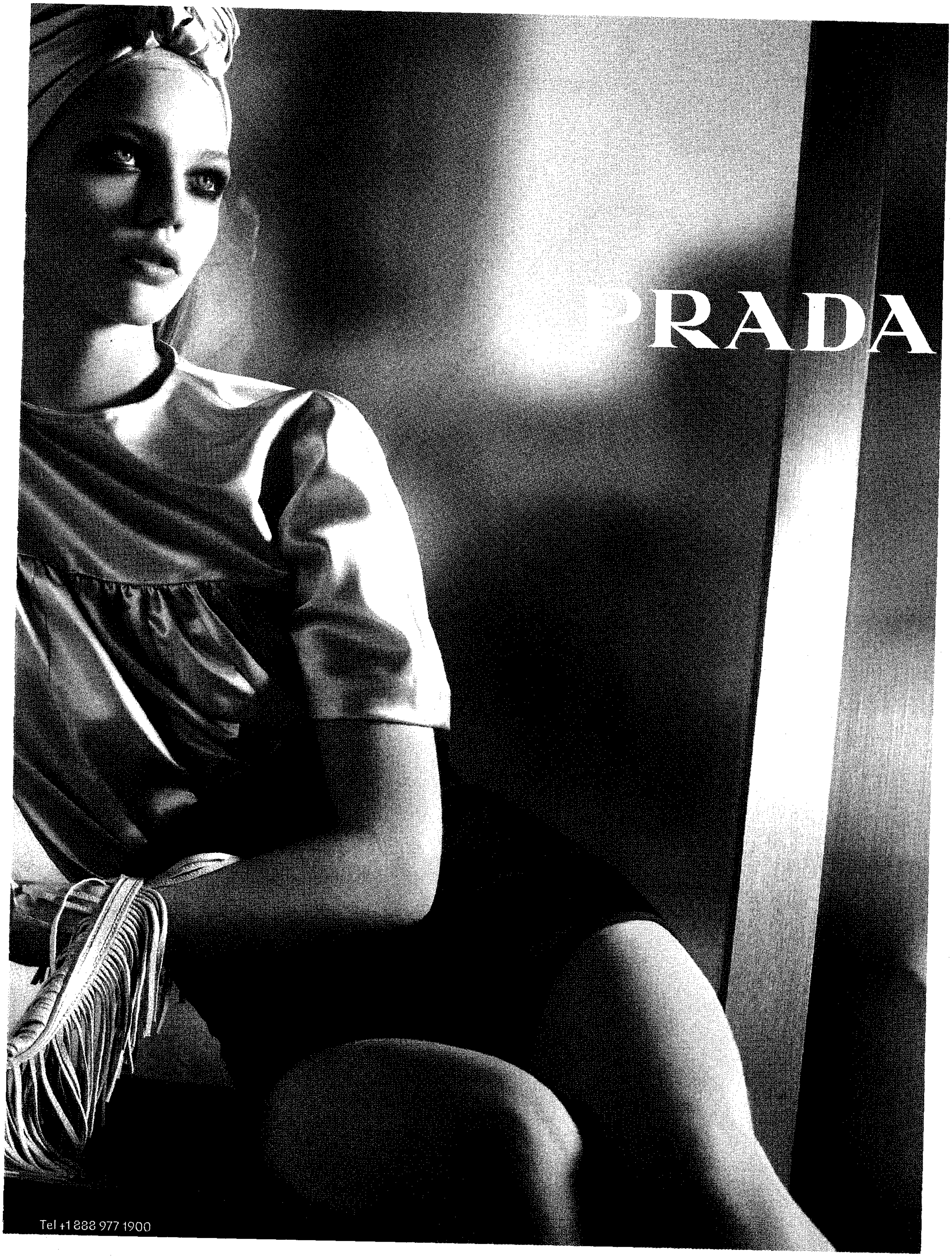
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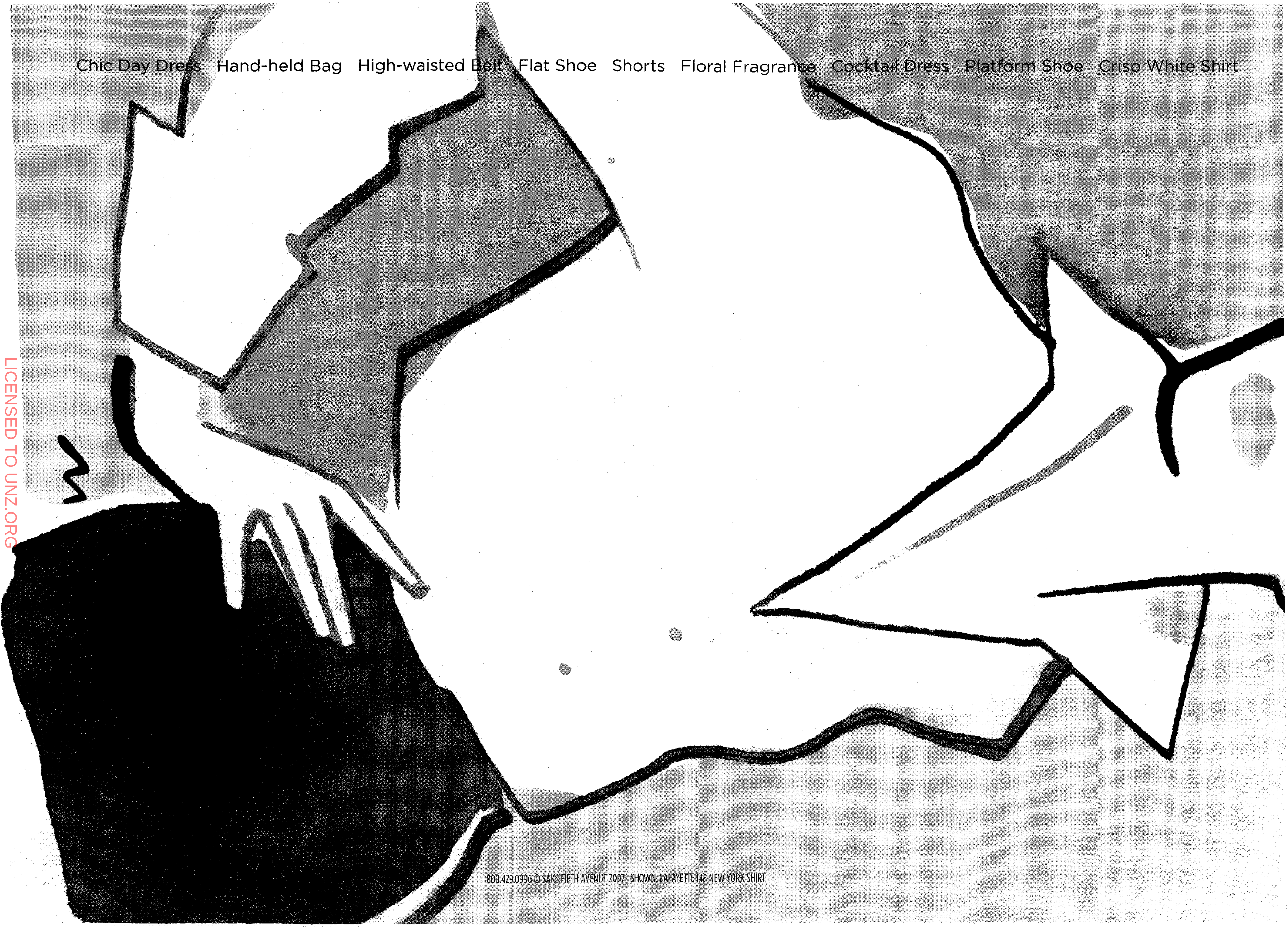
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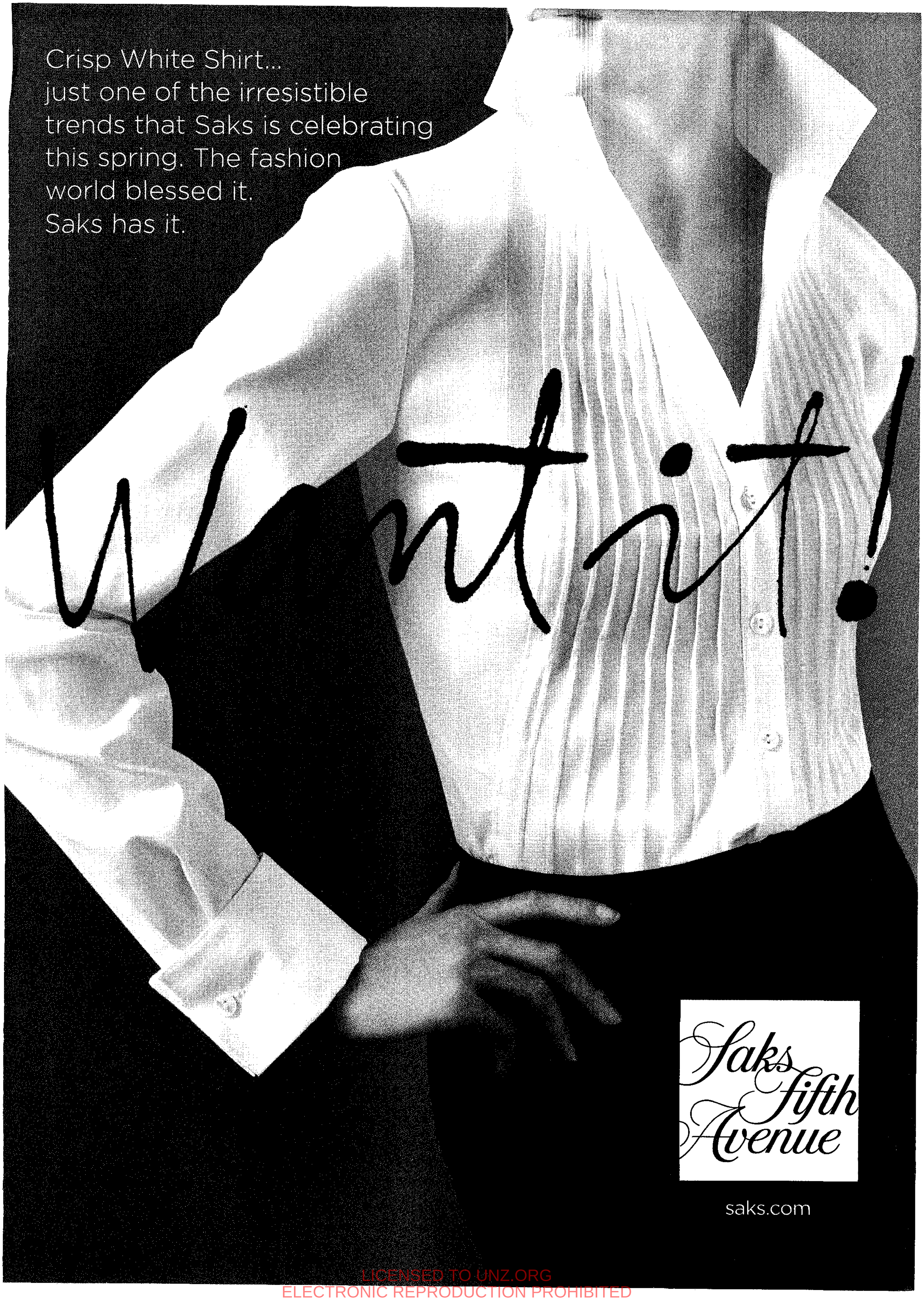

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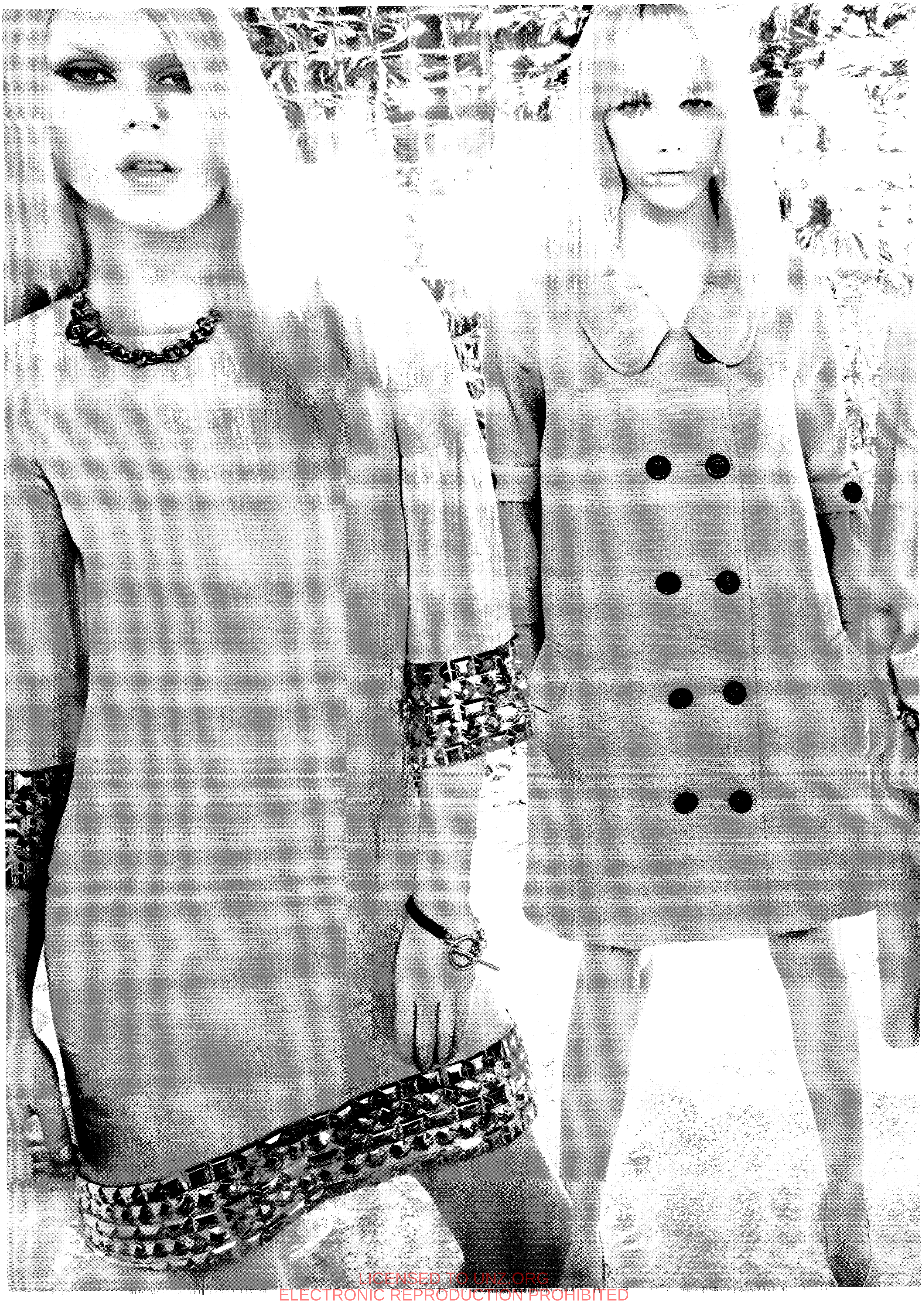

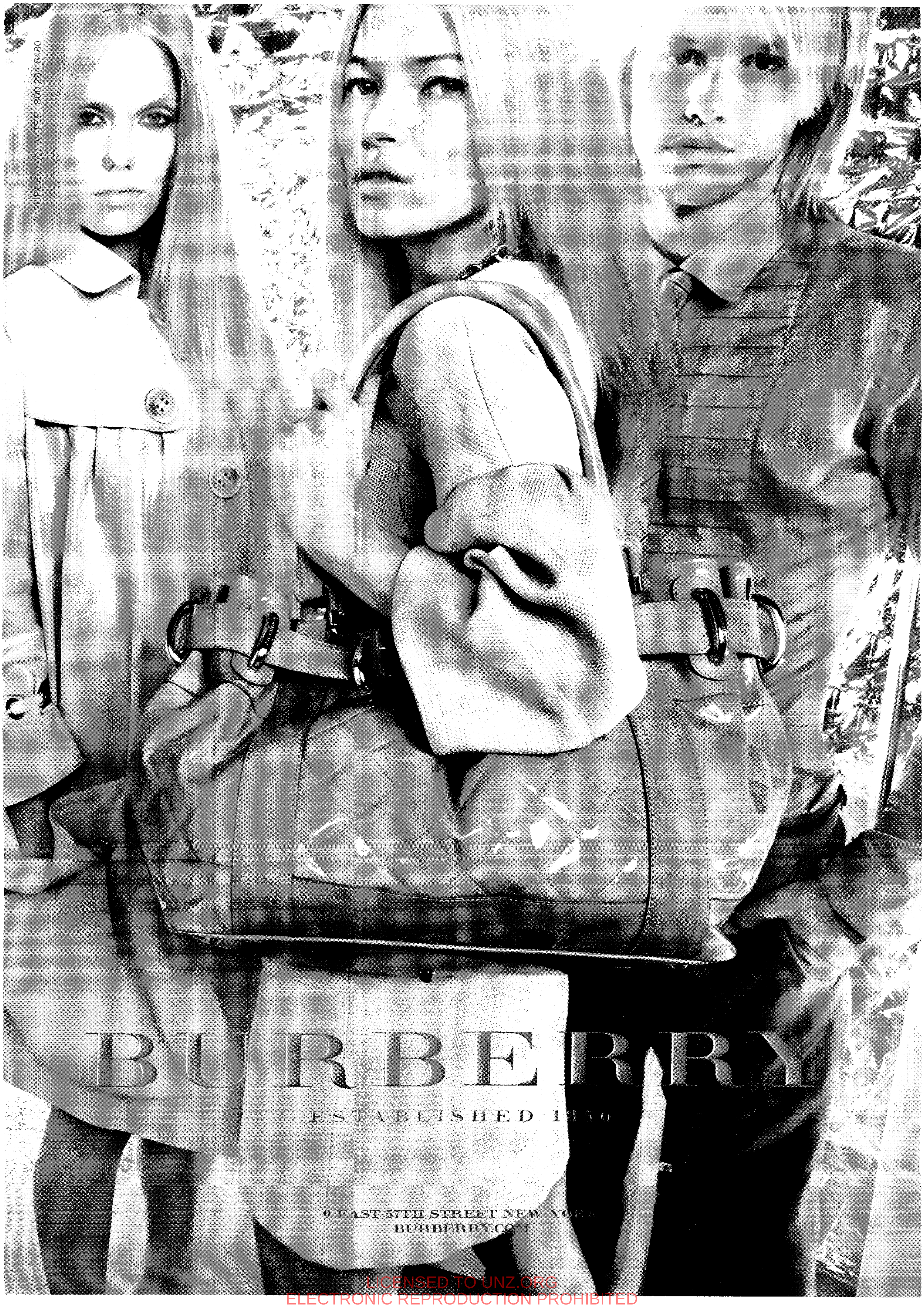
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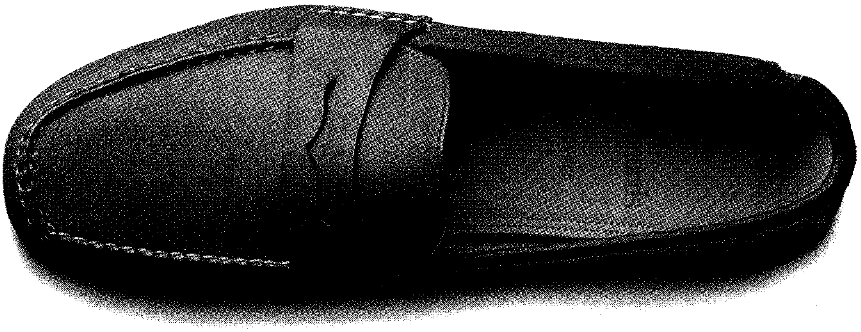

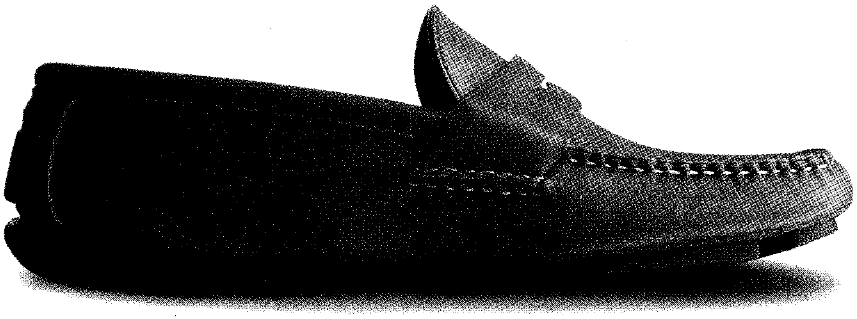

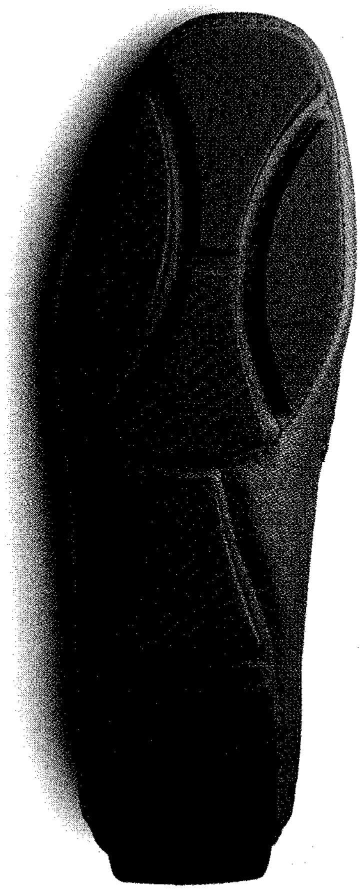

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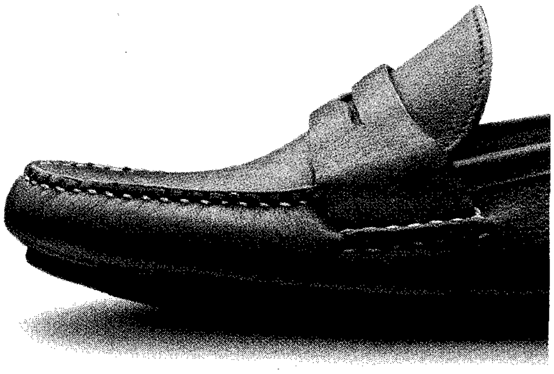

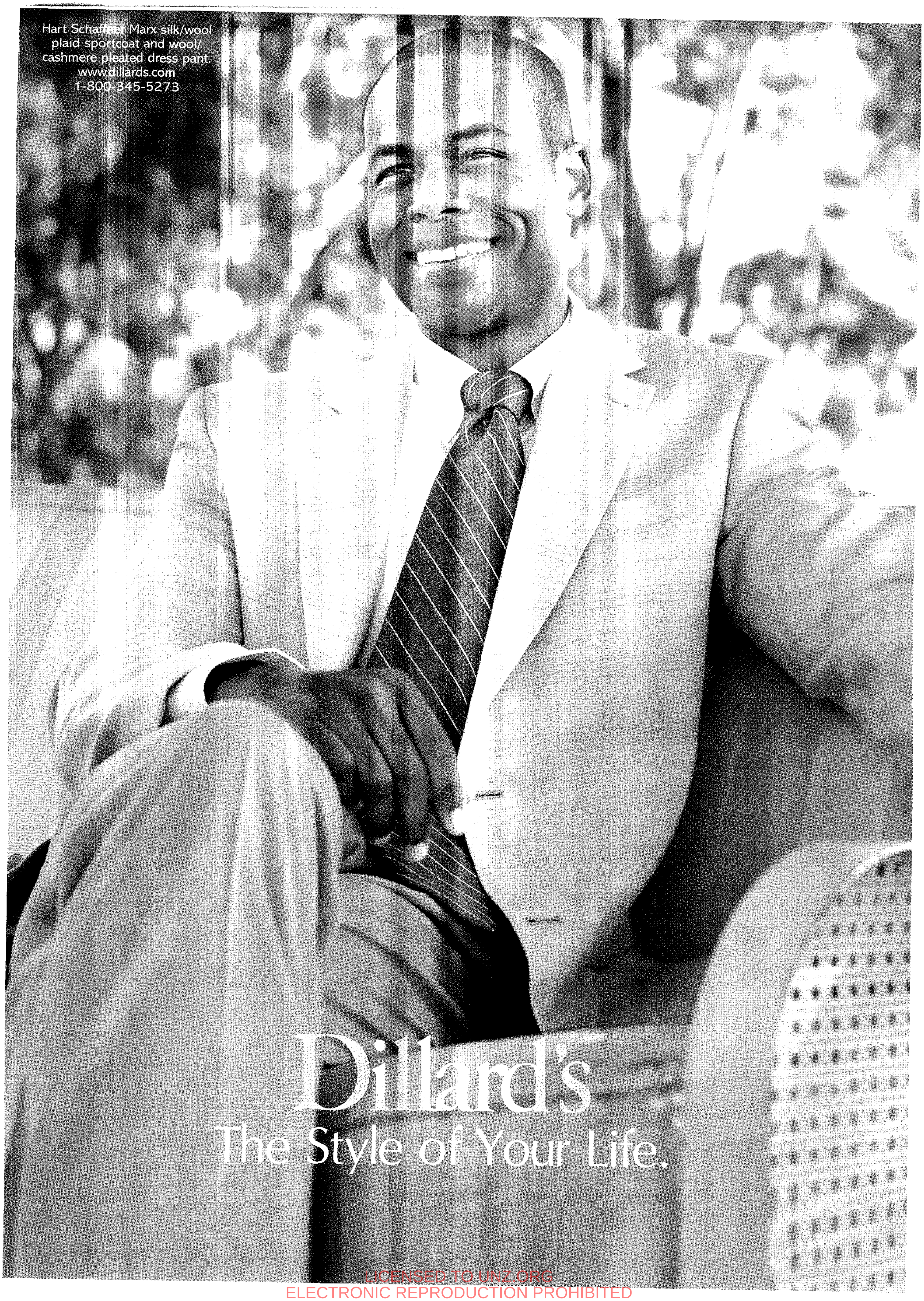
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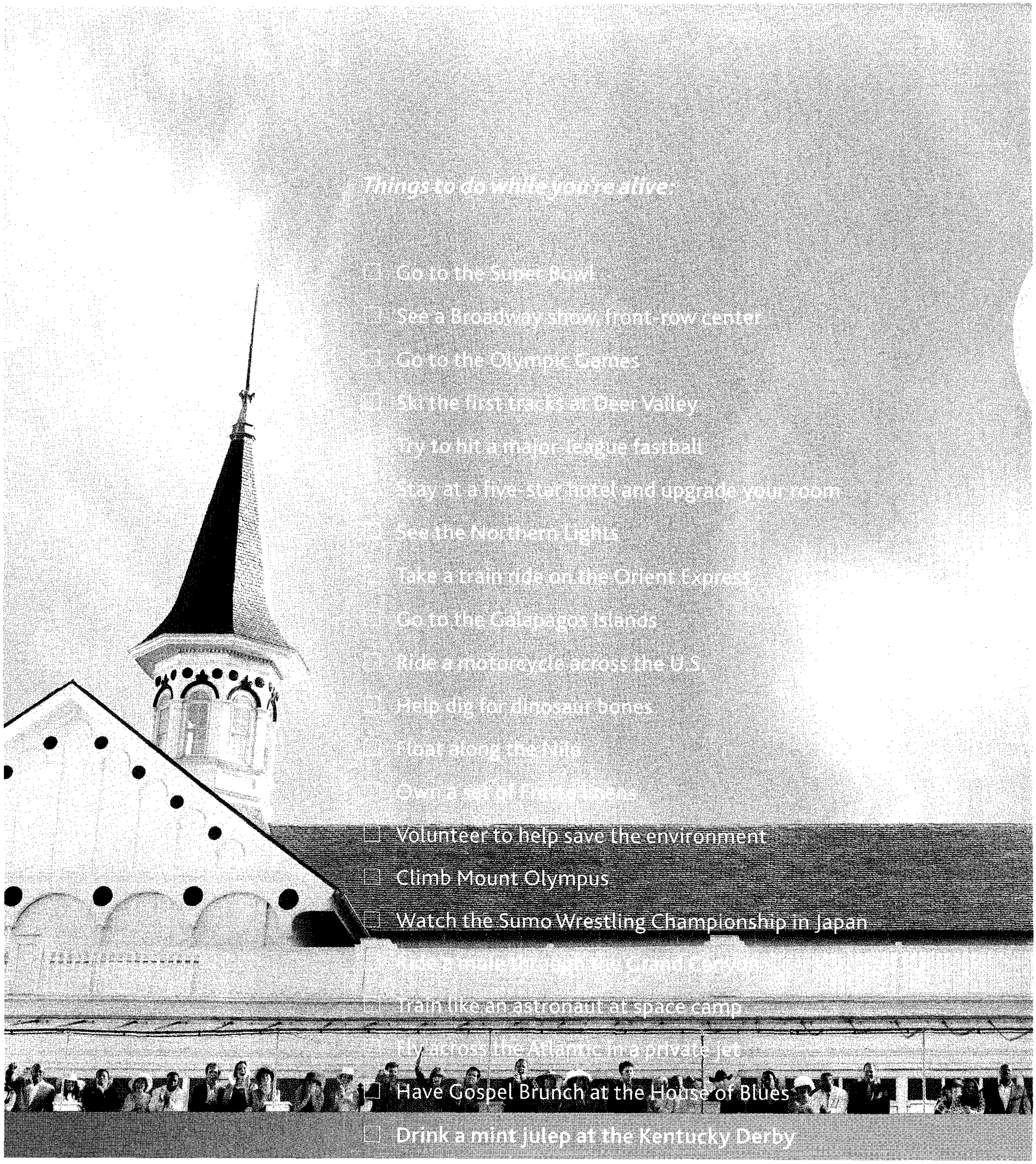

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☐ See a Broadway show, front-row center
☐ Go to the Olympic Games
☐ Ski the first tracks at Deer Valley
☐ Try to hit a major-league fastball
☐ Stay at a five-star hotel and upgrade your room
☐ See the Northern Lights
☐ Take a train ride on the Orient Express
☐ Go to the Galapagos Islands
☐ Ride a motorcycle across the U.S.
☐ Help dig for dinosaur bones
☐ Float along the Nile
☐ Own a set of Frette linens
☐ Volunteer to help save the environment
☐ Climb Mount Olympus
☐ Watch the Sumo Wrestling Championship in Japan
☐ Ride a mule through the Grand Canyon
☐ Train like an astronaut at space camp
☐ Fly across the Atlantic in a private jet
☐ Have Gospel Brunch at the House of Blues
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THE STYLE ISSUE

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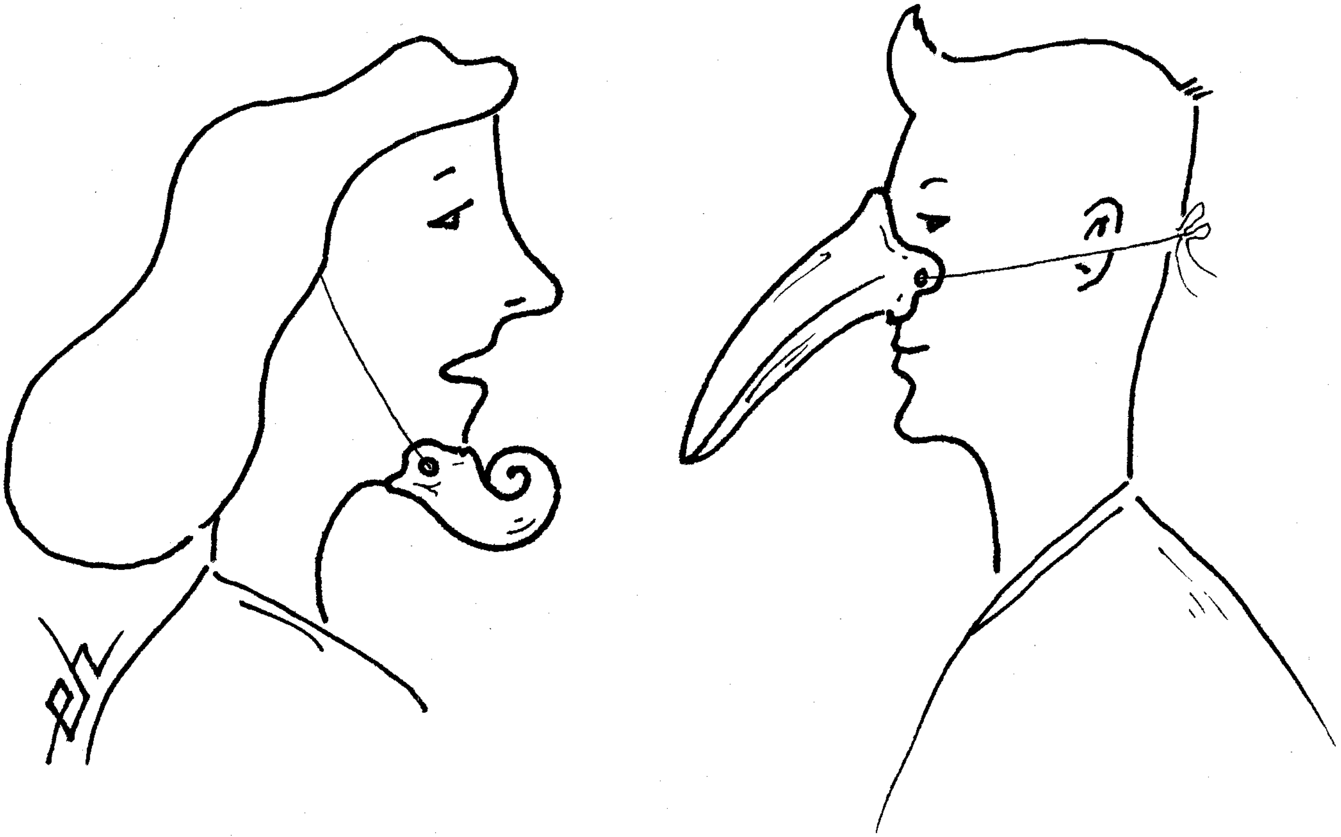
J. J. Sempé

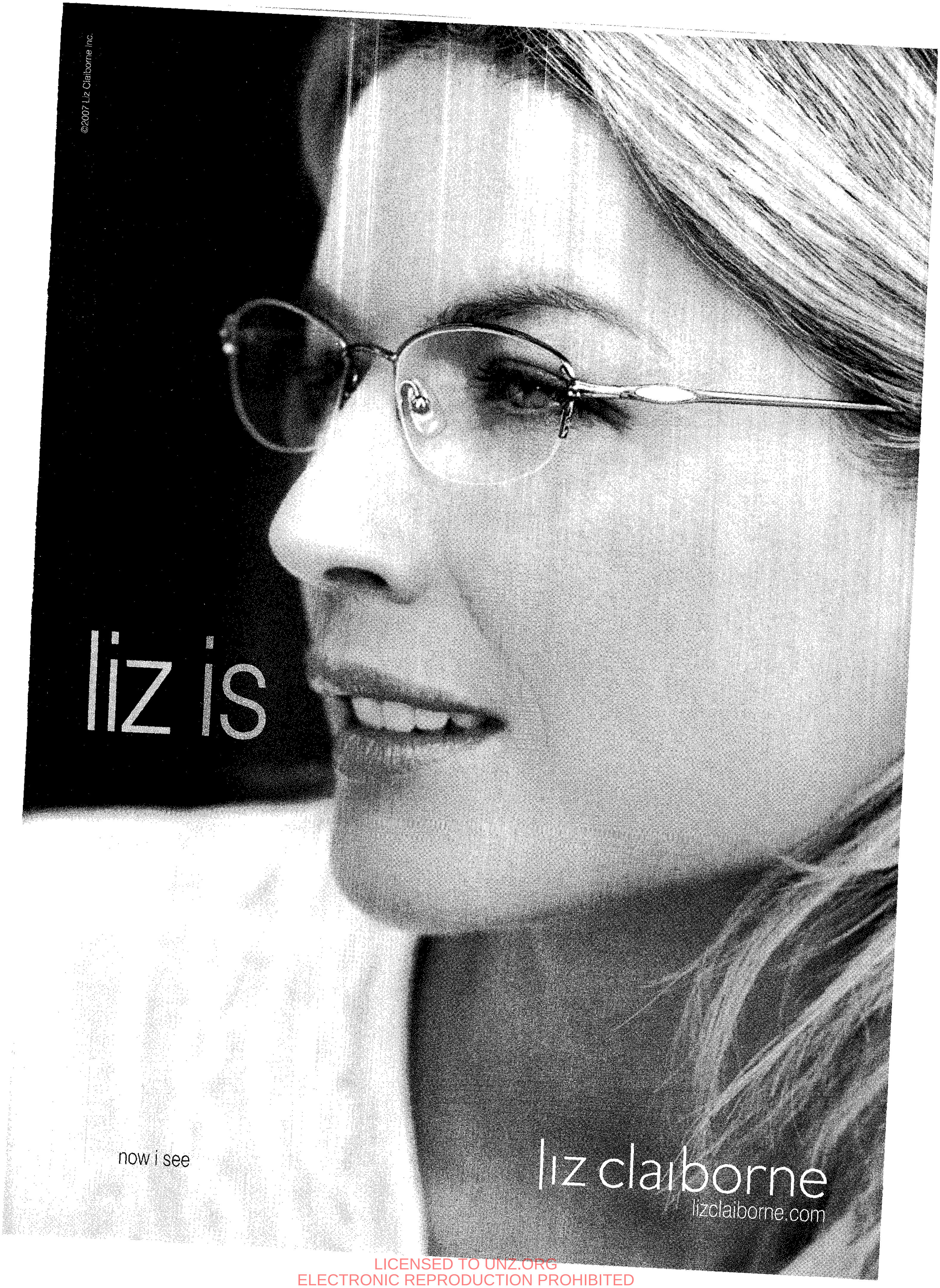
COVER
“Strutting Down the Catwalk”

DRAWINGS *Erik Hilgerdt, David Sipress, Mick Stevens, Victoria Roberts, Kim Warp, John O’Brien, Drew Dernavich, Michael Crawford, Leo Cullum, Charles Barsotti, Barry Blitt, Christopher Weyant, Roz Chast, Bruce Eric Kaplan, P. C. Vey, Jack Ziegler, Zachary Kanin, Eric Lewis*

SPOTS *Jean-Philippe Delhomme*



“Oh, darling—how much longer must we go on pretending?”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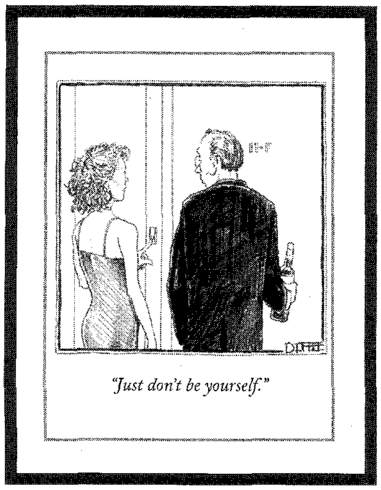
Jason Polan, 2006



"Just don't be yourself."

Matthew Diffee, 2006

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CONTRIBUTORS

John Colapinto ("In the Now," p. 112), a staff writer, is the author of two books, "As Nature Made Him" and "About the Author," a novel.

Jeffrey Toobin (Comment, p. 59) will publish "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," in the fall.

Patricia Marx ("Dressin' Texan," p. 68) writes for film and television. Her novel "Him Her Him Again The End of Him" came out in January.

Jeffrey Goldberg (The Talk of the Town, p. 60) is the author of "Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide."

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 66) writes a regular column on economics, business, and finance.

Lillian Ross (The Talk of the Town, p. 64) is a longtime staff writer.

Sarah Thornton ("Reality Art Show," p. 74), the author of "Club Cultures," is working on a book about the international contemporary-art world.

Dana Goodyear ("This Old Thing?" p. 84) is a staff writer. Her book of poems, "Honey and Junk," is out in paperback.

Larissa MacFarquhar ("Bag Man," p. 126) has been a staff writer since 1998.

Jack Gilbert (Poem, p. 95) won the 2005 National Book Critics Circle Award for his book of poems "Refusing Heaven."

Jonathan Lethem (Fiction, p. 98) is the author of seven novels, including "The Fortress of Solitude" and "You Don't Love Me Yet," which is out this month.

Nicholas Christopher (Poem, p. 120) will publish his fifth novel, "The Bestiary," in June. "Crossing the Equator: New & Selected Poems, 1972-2004," will be available in paperback in April.

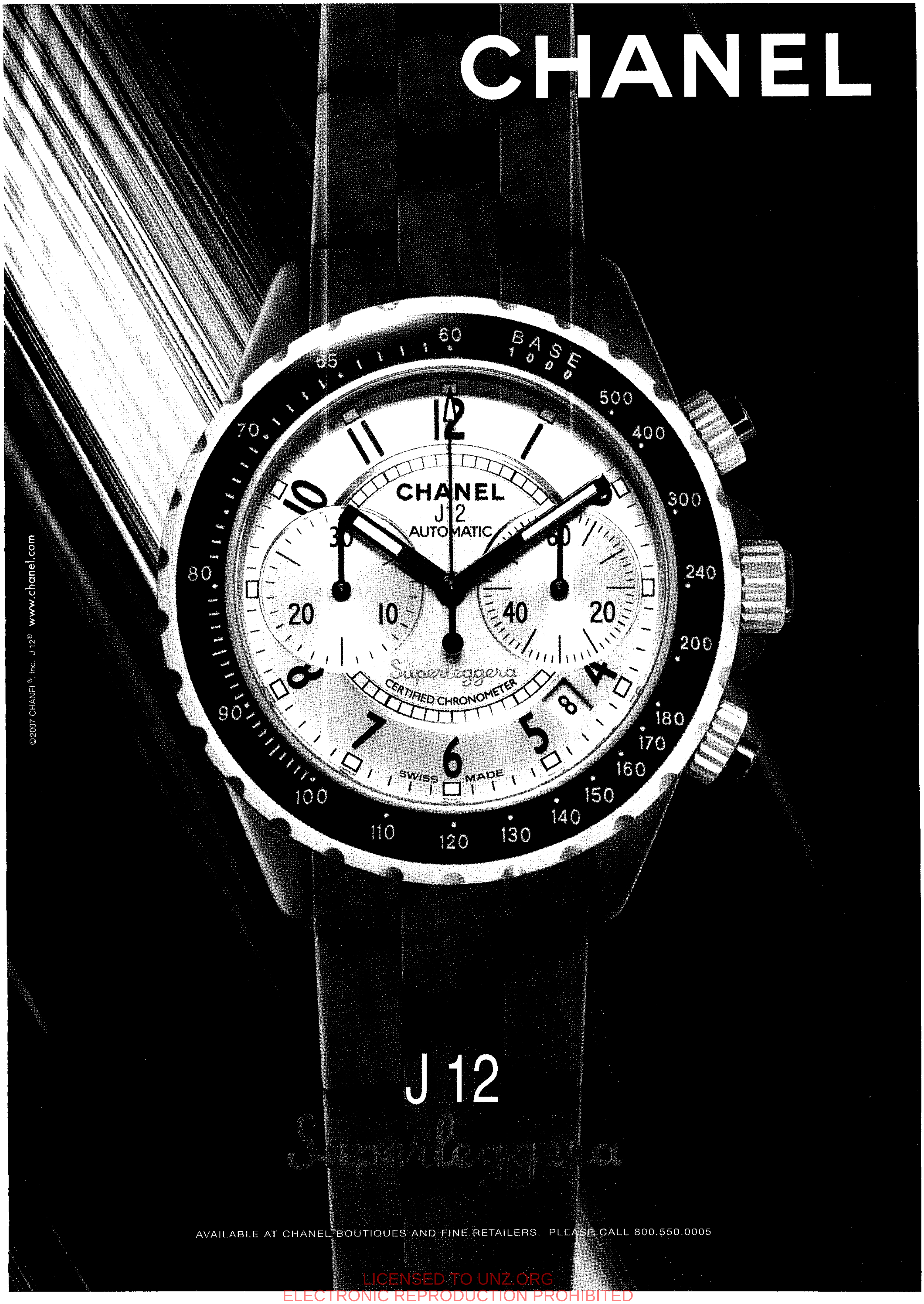
Judith Thurman (Books, p. 136) has a book of her *New Yorker* essays, "Cleopatra's Nose," coming out in the fall.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 146) is the magazine's art critic.

Paul Goldberger (The Talk of the Town, p. 62; The Sky Line, p. 148) holds the Joseph Urban Chair in Design and Architecture at the New School.

J. J. Sempé (Cover) recently published four illustrated books: "Nothing Is Simple," "Everything Is Complicated," "Sunny Spells," and "Mixed Messages."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
François-Marie Banier photographs Karl Lagerfeld and the artisans of the Chanel *métiers d'art.* / *Jonathan Lethem* talks with Cressida Leyshon about cultural references, real and imagined, in his fiction. / A video excerpt from *Lawrence Wright's* one-man show "My Trip to Al-Qaeda." / *Dan Baum's* daily dispatches from New Orleans. / A selection of articles from the current issue. / Video versions of animated cartoons; the caption contest; Q. & A.s, cover galleries, slide shows, and other Web exclusives; and a calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country, on our redesigned Web site.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MAKING AMENDS

I am writing to apologize to *The New Yorker* and Stacy Schiff, and to give some follow-up concerning Ryan Jordan (Editors' Note, March 5th). When I last spoke to *The New Yorker* about the fact that a prominent Wikipedia community member had lied about his credentials, I misjudged the issue. It was not O.K. for Mr. Jordan, or Essjay, to lie to a reporter, even to protect his identity. I later learned more about the deceptions involved and asked Mr. Jordan to resign from his positions of responsibility at Wikipedia. He has since resigned from his position at Wikia as well. Mr. Jordan is a wonderful and thoughtful young man who made a series of very bad judgments. I consider him a friend, and I hope that the world will allow him to move forward in peace and dignity to regain his honor through a life well lived. Wikipedia is built on trust and love. Our trust has been broken, and only love can rebuild it. The community has begun discussing a proposal of mine that we adopt some verification measures for claimed credentials, so that Wikipedia may further improve from this painful experience.

Jimmy Wales
President of Wikia, Inc.; board member
and Chairman Emeritus of the
Wikimedia Foundation
St. Petersburg, Fla.

AN EFFICIENT ARGUMENT

Two letters responding to Elizabeth Kolbert's January 22nd piece on my ideas for environmental efficiency call into question some of my arguments for creating incentives and standards (The Mail, February 12th). Contrary to one letter writer's claim, even when high gasoline prices cut driving the most, by seven per cent, in 1978-81, higher efficiency saved even more fuel (cars used thirteen per cent fewer gallons per mile, light trucks seven per cent). In 1995, the average light vehicle drove respectively twenty and twenty-two per cent more miles than in 1975, yet miles per gallon rose by fifty-one and sixty-five per cent. Today, a more effective market incentive known as feebates—a program to provide rebates for efficient vehicle models, paid for by fees on inefficient ones of similar size—could speed triple-efficiency vehicles to market while being profitable for automakers. Another letter writer claims that it would often take "years" to repay the extra cost of fatter wire in office-lighting circuits. In new buildings, which I was describing, the Copper Development Association correctly found paybacks of months, or about a year if a larger conduit is needed—a handsome return to both the bill payer and the environment for making less electricity. The durable copper can be recycled or reused indefinitely. Better still, designing more efficient lighting systems yields those benefits with even greater profits but no increase in copper mining.

Amory B. Lovins
Old Snowmass, Colo.

TELEVISED TORTURE

My personal experience as a U.S. Army interrogator belies the troubling attitude of Joel Surnow, the co-creator of "24," toward torture which Jane Mayer reports ("Whatever It Takes," February 19th & 26th). I have witnessed soldiers modelling their actions and speech, sometimes word for word, on movies such as "Full Metal Jacket," "Platoon," and "Apocalypse Now." Most interrogators do not use abusive techniques, because the results are unreliable and often counterproductive. What most concerns me, however, is the influence of shows like "24" on impressionable front-line soldiers and marines who lack sufficient training in the handling of prisoners. It is the abuse of the thousands of routine captives, who are often of no intelligence value, that erodes our credibility and moral standing, not the treatment of the minute number who possess information on imminent attacks. It is a shame that the Army has to expend resources attempting to counteract the corrosive influence that Jack Bauer and similar characters have on young soldiers. I have a hard time finding the patriotism in that.

Richard Kedzior
Chicago, Ill.

OFF-LINE NETWORKS

Jeffrey Toobin reports that Google characterizes its impressive index-the-libraries project as "the equivalent of a giant library card catalogue" ("Google's Moon Shot," February 5th). But library catalogues index only whole books and, occasionally, chapter headings, never the full text. Google's project is more like a giant combined back-of-the-book index, which constitutes vastly more detailed indexing than a library catalogue does. Dan Clancy, Google's chief engineer on the project, addresses the challenge of making books searchable by saying, "Books are not part of a network." But books are already part of a network—the references to other books and articles that most nonfiction books cite. The ISI Web of Knowledge citation indexes, to which most large academic libraries subscribe, trace this network. Drawing from several thousand journals, the indexes identify citation linkages between those journal articles and all other materials cited in the journals, including, of course, books.

Marcia J. Bates
Professor Emerita, Information Studies
U.C.L.A.
Los Angeles, Calif.

NAME AND GENDER

Lauren Collins and the fact-checkers at *The New Yorker* do not have to feel too bad about mistaking my gender (The Talk of the Town, March 5th). When I was born, Leslie Howard was all the rage; hence the name of my parents' little boy. Then along came Leslie Caron, and everything went to pot. With my own experience as a guide, I strongly advise all new parents to give their children utterly unambiguous names. Like Caligula.

Leslie Epstein
Brookline, Mass.

•

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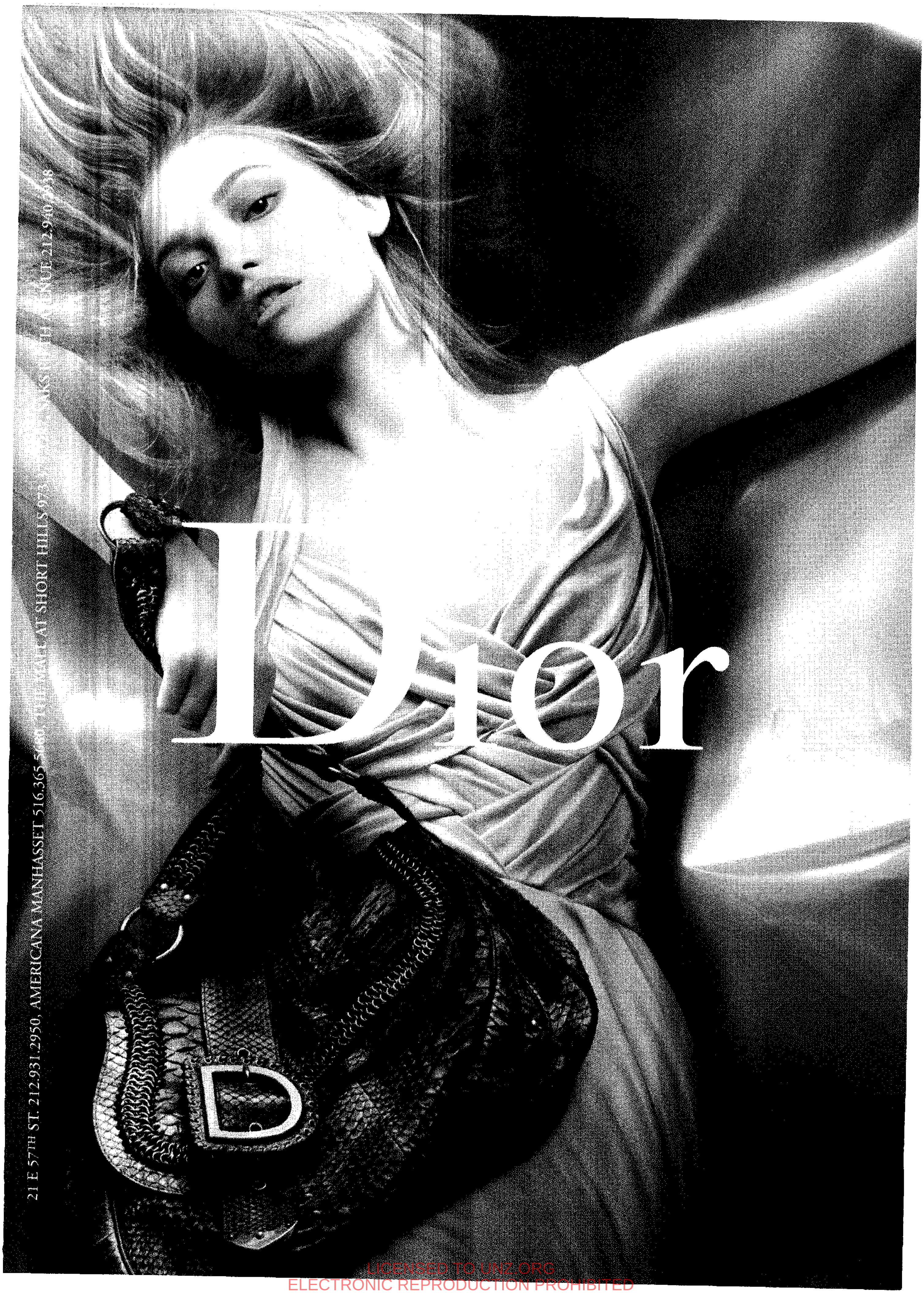
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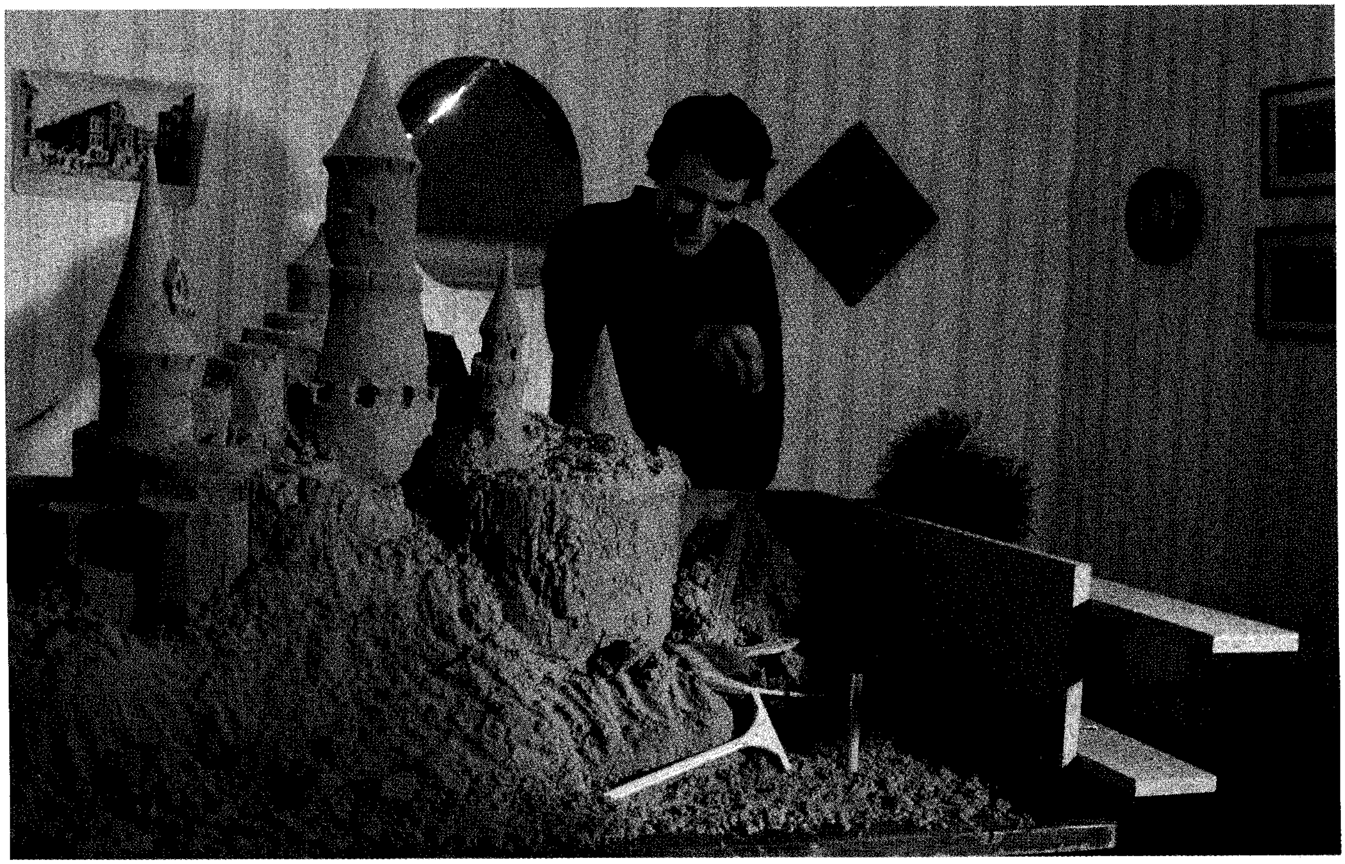

An installation by Manfredi Beninati, at the James Cohan gallery. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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18	19	20	14	15	16	17

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
GOING FOR THE GUT

The playwright Adam Rapp sketches portraits of gritty folks leading low-down lives. In his new play, "Essential Self-Defense," romance flowers between a man volunteering as a punching bag in a self-defense class and one of the students. (See page 28.)

NIGHT LIFE
QUIET STORM

The Brazilian musician Gilberto Gil has been a protest singer, an exile, and a government official (he's currently the minister of culture), but before now he's never embarked upon a solo tour. He's at Carnegie Hall this week to support his retrospective acoustic release, "Gil Luminoso." (See page 32.)

ART
LONG LIVE PAINTING

What is a painter to do when the medium is declared dead? "High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975," at the National Academy, shows how thirty-seven artists responded, including Lynda Benglis, Blinky Palermo, and Richard Tuttle. (See page 38.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BACH OR BUST

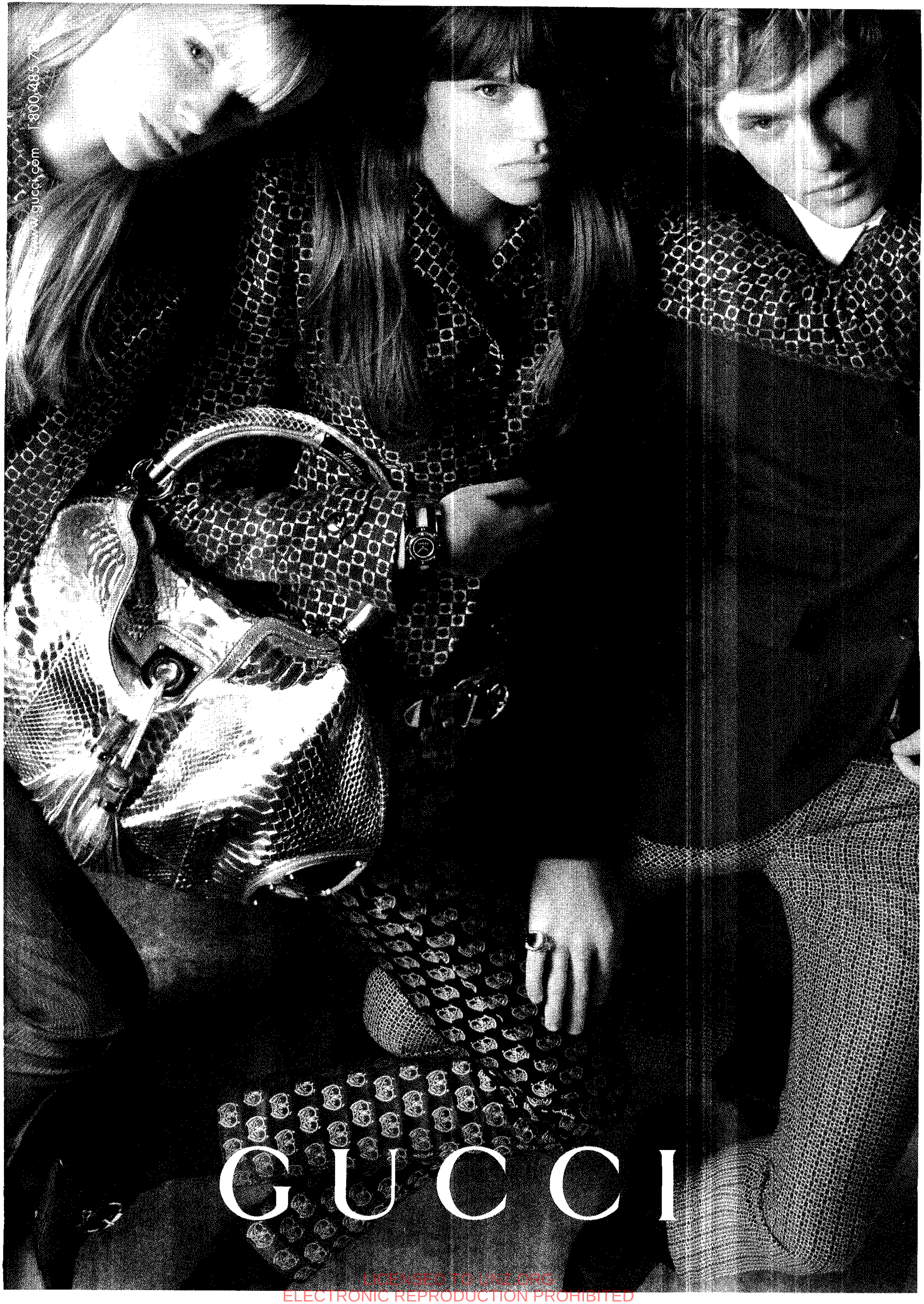
The New York Collegium, Andrew Parrott's admired early-music orchestra, is going on hiatus for an indefinite period; its next concert features the two cantatas with which Bach won the job of cantor at Leipzig's St. Thomas Church. (See page 46.)

MOVIES
TO SEE THE WIZARD

Harry Smith—the late filmmaker, painter, and folk anthropologist—was an artist-in-residence at Anthology Film Archives in the eighties. Anthology celebrates the multimedia shaman with a week of his films, as well as a documentary about Smith, "The Old, Weird America." (See page 54.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
ONE A DAY

March is National Small Press Month, and among the many events scheduled is a reading in the East Village featuring thirty-one writers from some of the country's best little publishing houses. (See page 56.)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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
VIRAL MARKETING

Nine Inch Nails, Trent Reznor's one-man band, will soon release a new album called "Year Zero." For now, though, you can participate in the accompanying alternate-reality game. Earlier this year, a fan noticed that letters on the back of a N.I.N. tour T-shirt formed the words "I am trying to believe." Adding ".com" to the end of this phrase brought up a Web site with information about a drug called Parepin, which had allegedly been released into the water supply of Orlando, either to protect the residents from bioterrorism or to brainwash them. Reznor and his marketing team add new Web sites every week or so, each describing a different part of an increasingly dark future. Much is basic conspiracy theory, but the methods have been ingenious. Several songs from "Year Zero" were left on U.S.B. drives in the bathrooms of venues hosting N.I.N. shows. The drives also contained digital noises that decoded into phone numbers or yielded visual waveforms with the image of a creepy giant hand. Though I still prefer the TV show "Lost," there are few reasons to reject the kicks of this decidedly commercial art form.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE ACCOMPLICES
Bernard Weinraub's drama, presented by the New Group, is about the Revisionist Zionist Hillel Kook, who fought for the aid of European Jews during the Second World War. Previews begin March 20. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BLACKBIRD
A play by David Harrower, starring Jeff Daniels and Alison Pill, about a young woman who shows up unexpectedly at the office of her former lover. Joe Mantello directs. Previews begin March 15. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

CURTAINS
David Hyde Pierce plays a show-loving detective, in a new musical murder mystery by John Kander and the late Fred Ebb. In previews. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

ESSENTIAL SELF-DEFENSE
In Adam Rapp's new play, a human punching bag at a women's self-defense class helps a Midwestern town defeat a mysterious evil force. Carolyn Cantor directs. Previews begin March 15. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FUGUE
Judith Ivey directs a comedic drama by Lee Thuna, about a woman with amnesia and a doctor running away from his past. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

INHERIT THE WIND
Christopher Plummer and Brian Dennehy star in Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's dramatic retelling of the Scopes trial of 1925. Previews begin March 19. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

JACK GOES BOATING
LAByrinth Theatre Company stages a play by Bob Glaudini, about dating, drugs, and betrayal. The cast includes Philip Seymour Hoffman and Daphne Rubin-Vega. In previews. Opens March 18. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

OUR LEADING LADY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a play by Charles Busch, about the actors who performed at Ford's Theatre on the night of Lincoln's assassination. Lynne Meadow directs. In previews. Opens March 20. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE PIRATE QUEEN
A new musical by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg ("Les Misérables"), based on the story of the sixteenth-century Irish chieftain Grace O'Malley. In previews. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
The return of "Di Yam Gazlonim," Folksbiene's Yiddish-language version of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic. Opens March 18. (J.C.C., 334 Amsterdam Ave. 212-279-4200.)

PROMETHEUS BOUND
David Oyelowo plays the overreaching god in Aquila Theatre Company's production of the Aeschylus drama. In previews. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)

SOME MEN
Terrence McNally's new play follows the reminiscences of the guests at a gay wedding. Directed by Trip Cullman. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

STAY
The première of Lucy Thurber's story of a young writer who discovers an angel. Jackson Gay directs. In previews. Opens March 19. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW / TWELFTH NIGHT
The all-male British troupe Propeller presents both Shakespeare comedies in repertory. Edward Hall directs. Opens March 17. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

TEA AND SYMPATHY
Keen Company revives Robert Anderson's 1953 drama, about a boarding-school student who is the subject of merciless homophobic taunts. In previews. Opens March 15. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

WIDOWERS' HOUSES
Epic Theatre Center sets George Bernard Shaw's 1892 drama in 1992 Harlem. Opens March 14. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
Vanessa Redgrave stars in Joan Didion's stage adaptation of her memoir, a reflection on grief and survival, written after the death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne. David Hare directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

AT LEAST IT'S PINK
Loud and crude yet winningly warm, Bridget Everett is an odd hybrid: one part foulmouthed, buxom comedienne, one part Oprah. In two sets of clever songs (which she co-wrote with Kenny Mellman, of Kiki & Herb), she hits notes of brassy hilarity, but recurring jokes about being fat and having abortions—and a handful of confessional ballads—send the tone veering into uncomfortable pathos. This dame can definitely work a room, but, as she freely admits, she doesn't know when to stop. (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE ATTIC
Yoji Sakate has written a fascinating but overstuffed play about a Japanese trend without an American equivalent: the compulsion of some young people to withdraw to minuscule rooms for long periods of time. (There are reportedly hundreds of thousands of such *hikikomori* in contemporary Japan.) In Sakate's fantastical plot, teen-age recluses, forensic detectives, samurai warriors, and an unhappy wife all pass through an onstage wooden box with slanted rafters—an "attic kit" for sale in department stores. Despite the literal confines of its subject, the play—directed with authority by Ari Edelson and energetically acted—is excessively stocked with characters, conceits, dark jokes, and sheer oddities. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BE
The Tel Aviv-based group Mayumana performs a new stage spectacle, a kinetic blend of movement, theatre, and percussion. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.)

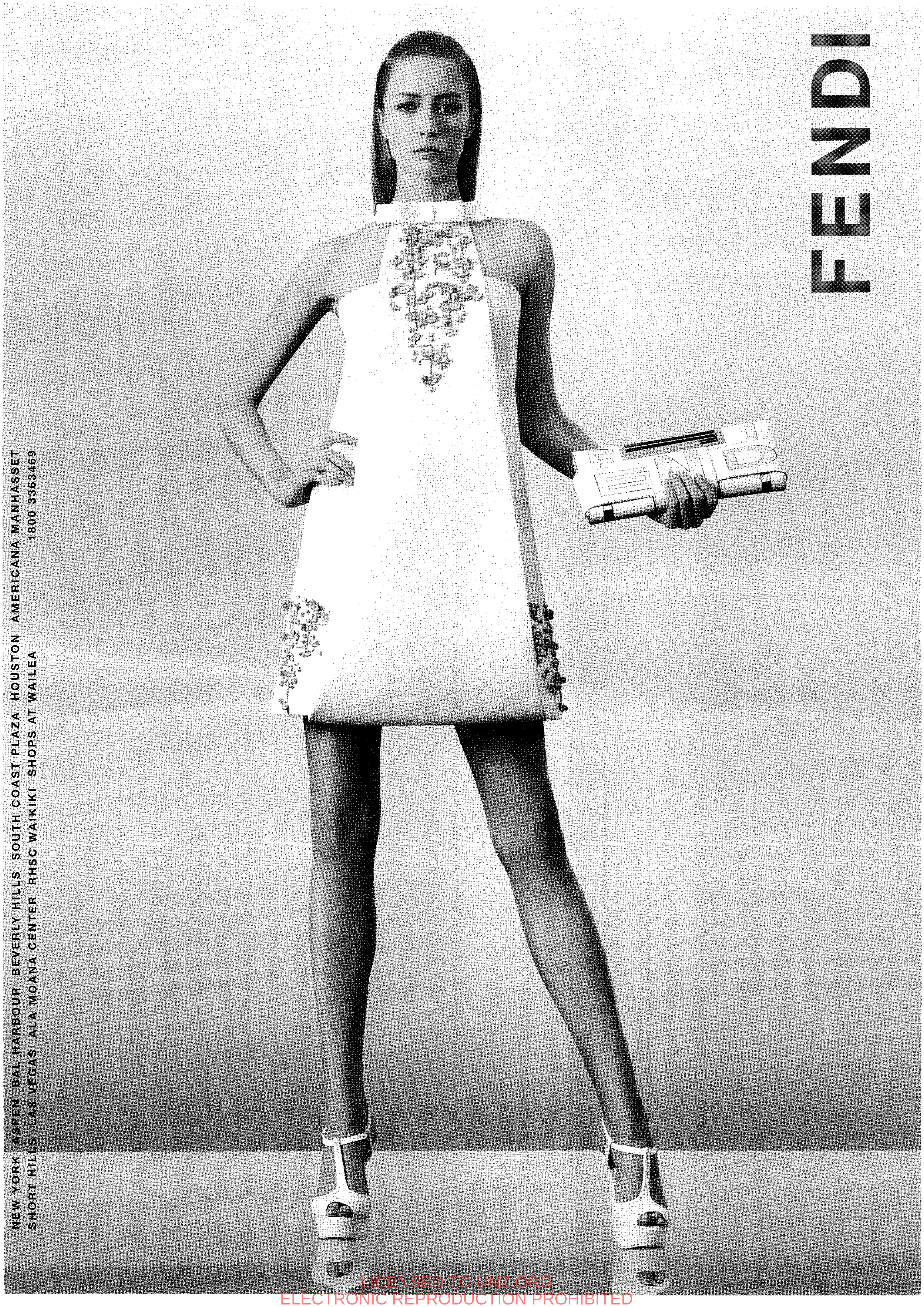
BFF
Anna Ziegler's tenderly chiaroscuro play about adolescence is an unmitigated pleasure. Playing best friends—Eliza and Lauren—Laura Heisler and Sasha Eden are radiantly real, capturing the easy affection and hurt of teen-age friendship. Sex and cruelty intrude on their idyll, and Lauren's eager experiments with boys drive Eliza deeper into her own shell. Ziegler's writing is rueful, frank, and fresh; her insights into young womanhood feel earned and authentic. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

BILL W. AND DR. BOB
A light historical drama about Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, two alcohol abusers from Vermont who gave up the bottle to preach the gospel of sobriety: they were the founders and first two members of Alcoholics Anonymous. The quaint storytelling techniques employed in Stephen Bergman and Janet Surrey's script are uplifted by warm humor, particularly on the part of Patrick Husted, who plays Smith. (There's irony in this: Dr. Bob, as imagined here, is a funny drunk; you almost don't want him to go dry.) The play is wise not to impose itself too seriously as a drama of triumph over addiction, but rather paints a modest and endearing portrait of friendship and human weakness. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

BLINDNESS
A doctor's wife is the only person who can see in a town plagued by sightlessness, in Joe Tantalo's adaptation of the novel, by the Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE CAVE DWELLERS
William Saroyan's 1957 drama is about a group of outcasts who create a second home in a run-down theatre. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

MAXIMILIAN BODE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CHICKEN
Michael Imperioli ("The Sopranos") stars in a play by Mike Batistick, about a Bronx man who gets mixed up in illegal cockfighting. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART THREE: SALVAGE
In the third and weakest part of Tom Stoppard's epic pageant about nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals hatching revolution, Alexander Herzen (Brían F. O'Byrne), exiled in London, launches *The Bell*, a muckraking paper that taunts his motherland with censored news and radical argument, until serfdom is finally abolished, in 1861. The historical trajectory of the tale is long; Stoppard's characterization, however, is shorthand. The director, Jack O'Brien, tells the story at spectacular full throttle, and if it looks at times like a musical—for instance, in the playful, stylized way that the radical émigrés announce themselves to the audience—well, in a sense it is: Stoppard is dealing here with the music of time. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/5/07.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

THE CURSE OF THE MYSTIC RENALDO THE
Aldo Perez plays an oddball nineteen-twenties aristocrat caught in a love triangle with a chambermaid and a valet. (3LD Art and Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101. Through March 17.)

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH
Stuart Carolan's drama is set in nineteen-eighties Northern Ireland, where an I.R.A. investigator is on the trail of an undercover informer. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

DYING CITY
Christopher Shinn's thin wartime psychodrama provides a method-acting workout for Pablo Schreiber, who plays identical twins in alternating scenes. Craig is an Iraq-war fatality who returns in memory; Peter, a self-conscious actor, is very much alive. Both brothers have unresolved issues with the passive Kelly (Rebecca Brooksher), a well-meaning young therapist who married the brooding Craig just a couple of years before his death. Shinn gives each of the characters generous helpings of traumatic backstory and contrives a plot around both brothers' maltreatment of Kelly, but he fails to enlist much sympathy for any of the three. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

HAMLET
The Wooster Group's adaptation, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte, is derived from Richard Burton's "Theatrofilm" version, from 1964. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

HOWARD KATZ
A dark comedy by Patrick Marber, starring Alfred Molina. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

IN THE HEIGHTS
Lin-Manuel Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes's new musical, about the largely Dominican community of Washington Heights, may kick off with a vibrant rap number, but its themes—big dreams, young love, struggle without despair—are sampled directly from the mid-century American musical. If the traditionalism of "In the Heights" serves ultimately to hem in the psychology of its characters, the show is buoyed significantly by Miranda, who not only wrote the winning score (a fusion of Latin, pop, and street styles) but is also the leading man. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

JOURNEY'S END
R. C. Sherriff's stirring depiction of life under fire amidst the officer class during the First World War gets a first-class revival, with uniformly strong performances (the cast includes Hugh Dancy, Boyd Gaines, Jefferson Mays, and Stark Sands) and deft direction, by David Grindley. The play's rock-solid structure and shrewd, unhectoring dialogue have an indubitable cumulative power that echoes down the ages to the futility of our present war. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

KING HEDLEY II
The third play in Signature's August Wilson series depicts a struggling Pittsburgh neighborhood in the nineteen-eighties. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

KING LEAR
Kevin Kline assumes the title role in James Lapine's production. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

LOS ANGELES
There are no angels in the city that Julian Sheppard sketches in his punishing new drama, which follows a jittery, none-too-bright waif named Audrey (Katherine Waterston) as she descends into hell, circle by revolting circle. The disturbed Audrey is ravenous for kindness and drug money; she stumbles around in a slinky slip, careening from one abusive relationship to the next in a succession of gruelling one-on-one encounters. The director, Adam Rapp, does his best to energize the play with rock interludes and unexpected staging, but what keeps you watching, despite a sense of voyeuristic discomfort, is Waterston's arresting, thin-skinned performance. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through March 17.)

MARY ROSE
At first sighting, the jejune, elusive Mary Rose Morland (Paige Howard) is clearly one of J. M. Barrie's charming embodiments of arrested development. During a trip to the Outer Hebrides, she disappears for twenty-five years, and when she finally returns to the living her family has aged beyond recognition. With the empathic power of his imagination, her now grown son, Harry (Richard Short), whose mother never actually recognizes him, nonetheless liberates her from woe and engineers a kind of salvation for them both. Tina Landau's clever and stimulating production turns Barrie's sometimes elaborate stage directions into a character, the Narrator (Keir Dullea), a trope that adds visual and intellectual strength to the delicate play. (3/5/07) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
Oberon Theatre Ensemble's staging of Shakespeare's comedy. Beginning March 15, it runs in repertory with "Sweet Love Adieu," a new verse play by Ryan J-W Smith. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MY TRIP TO AL-QAEDA
Lawrence Wright, a staff writer for this magazine, performs a theatrical companion piece to his book "The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11," elaborating on his reporting adventures in the Middle East and on his disillusionment with the America that emerged following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Parts of the play revisit information that appears in the book, with visual aids, while others provide personal touches: Wright's amused bewilderment at Saudi culture, his moral confusion interviewing sources with terrorist connections. Wright's genial book-on-tape demeanor may not fit his chosen genre of reportage-as-theatre, but he offers a lucid picture of our enemies abroad as well as a provocative reflection on America's tarnished ideals. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

THE NAKED EYE PLANETS
Rebecca Tourino's drama follows the residents of an apartment complex in the days leading up to a rare astronomical event. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 800-838-3006.)

PRELUDE TO A KISS
A neurotic young bride and an old man share an enchanted kiss, in the Roundabout's revival of Craig Lucas's wistful drama. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

REPUBLIC OF DREAMS
A new piece by Double Edge Theatre draws on the life, death, and surreal work of the Polish writer and artist Bruno Schulz. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through March 18.)

SLEEP OVER
A drama by Maria Micheles, about a couple who try to save their relationship by sleeping with other people. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

SPALDING GRAY: STORIES LEFT TO TELL
The late Spalding Gray was a one-of-a-kind monologuist, so it's a mercy that none of the five cast members in this evening of his published and unpublished writings (assembled by the director, Lucy Sexton, and Gray's widow, Kathleen Russo) tries to imitate his sparkling delivery. Instead, two women, two men, and a rotating guest performer give diverse interpretations of Gray's tales of family, death, sex, and life's strange accidents; what they share is a radiant affection for the stories and the man who crafted them. Sexton keeps the actors moving and pumps up the atmosphere with glossy design elements, but she needn't have: Gray's penetrating, unsparing words have their own inherent power. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-7171.)

TABLES FOR TWO

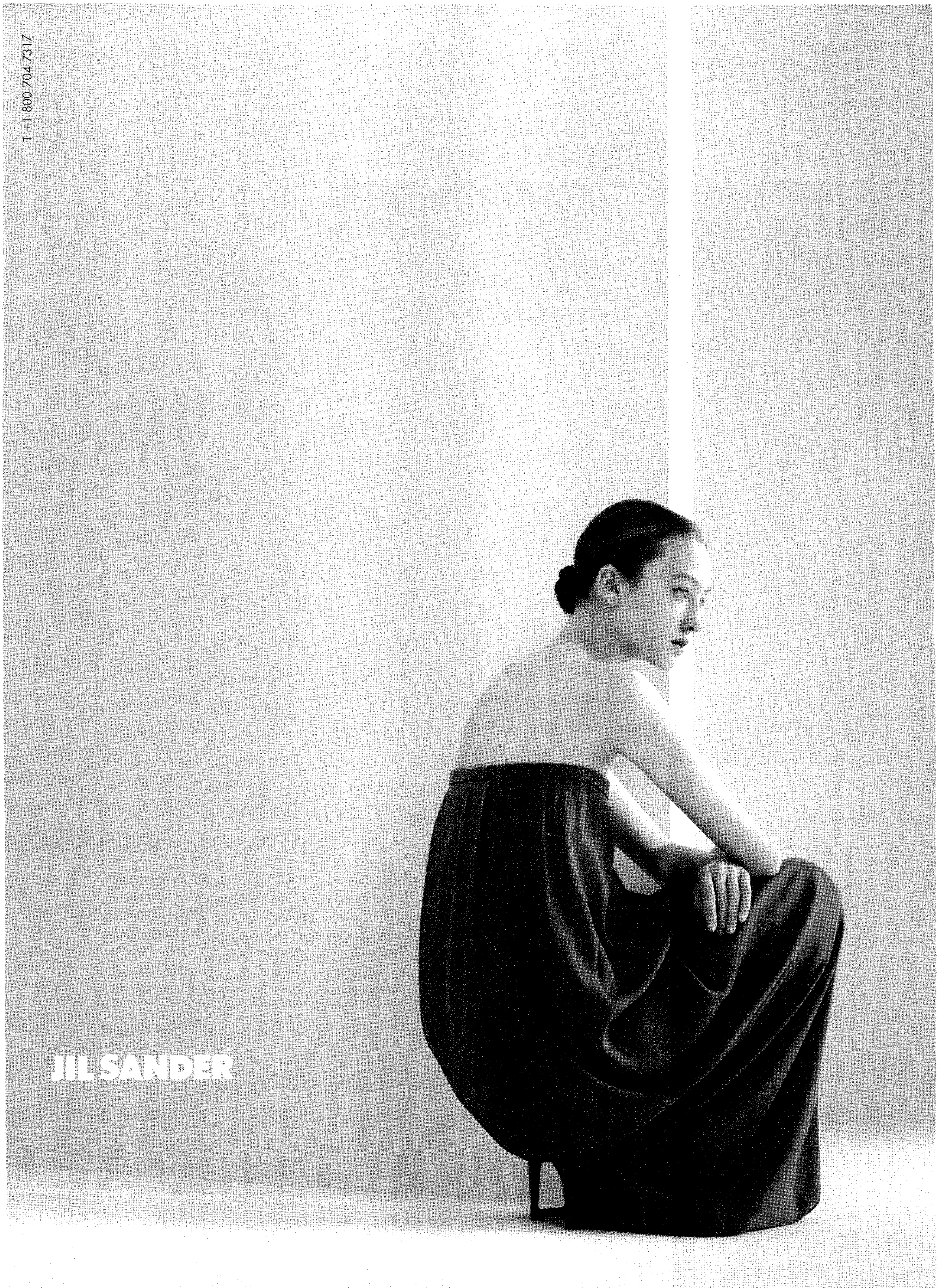
FALAI

68 Clinton St. (212-259-1960)—Before setting up on his own, Iacopo Falai was the pastry chef at Le Cirque 2000, and something of a pastry chef's fastidious showmanship informs his small restaurant on the Lower East Side, which takes a distinctly high-gloss approach to Italian cuisine. Falai has a thing for tiny slivers of dried fruit (which he keeps in little plastic boxes, for decoration), and for such arcana as crosnes (a minuscule root), duck tongues, and shavings of *bottarga* (dried fish roe). Pastas come flavored with chocolate, pear, almond, chestnut; a buffalo-ricotta-and-wild-mushroom flan features a white bloom of creamy cheese on a sweet crust.

Falai is as adept at plain as at fancy. Cockles on linguini come enveloped in a light filigree of foam, but the main pleasure of the dish is the freshness of the pasta itself. Venison comes relatively unadorned, in dapper little rectangles that are tender and salty. Only very occasionally do you feel that Falai's virtuosity has failed to realize the potential of an ingredient. Monkfish fillets, for instance, are carved into round medallions, as if masquerading as scallops, but lack both savor and succulence. Falai is on surer ground whipping up (literally) *merluzzo* (flaked cod), mushrooms, and, one suspects, a great deal of oil, a glitzy take on a historically humble dish that he tops off with a few almonds and chick-pea crackers.

In keeping with the refinement of the cooking, the small room is tiled and furnished entirely in white, the tables jammed together in a tight line: halfway between a canteen and a laboratory. The place is usually packed, and Falai has opened a more casual venue a block down on Clinton, Falai Panetteria, where the bread for his mini-empire is baked, and another, Caffe Falai, on Lafayette Street, in SoHo. At all the venues, it is crucial to find room for dessert: tiny citrus tarts, semolina tarts, even simple biscotti. Falai's talent for sweetness seems inexhaustible, and nowhere more so than in the main restaurant's passion-fruit soufflé, a creation right at the meringue end of the soufflé spectrum—so light that it all but hovers above the plate. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Entrées $17-$34.)

—*Leo Carey*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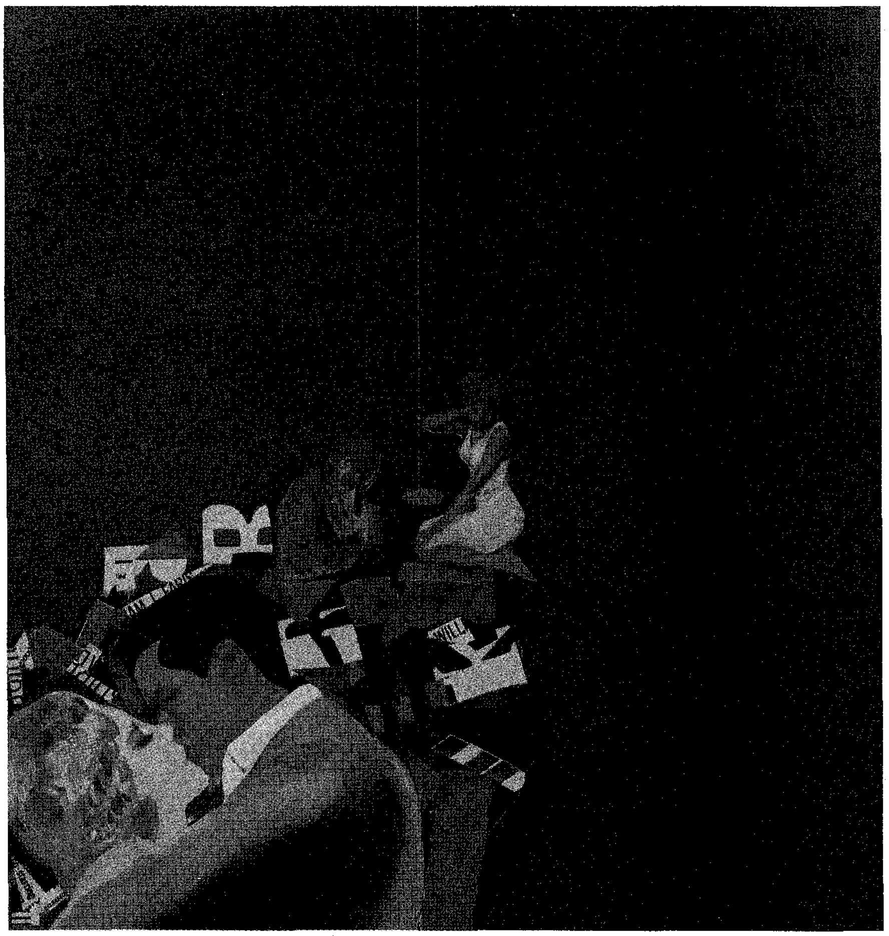
JIL SANDER

TALK RADIO
Liev Schreiber plays the acerbic host of a Cleveland radio show, in a Broadway revival of Eric Bogosian's 1987 play. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

TALL GRASS
A triptych of dark comedic vignettes about relationships, by Brian Harris. Directed by Nick Corley. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)



Paintings by Rosalyn Drexler, including "Lovers" (1963), are at PaceWildenstein.

Also Playing

A CHORUS LINE: Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART ONE: VOYAGE:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART TWO: SHIPWRECK:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **GUTENBERG! THE MUSICAL!:** The Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 212-239-6200. **THE MADRAS HOUSE:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE:** Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 14: **Peter Rowan** and **Tony Rice.** If bluegrass has a guitar god, it's Rice, who has left a generation of aspiring guitarists trying to duplicate his clean, speedy, otherworldly sound. His partner, Rowan, is a master of high lonesome who came of age in Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys and went on to record, with Jerry Garcia, Vassar Clements, and David Grisman, the legendary live bluegrass album "Old & in the Way." March 15: The **Commitments,** a soul ensemble with roots in the 1991 Alan Parker film of the same name (and featuring a smattering of alumni from the original cast). March 16: **Little Feat.** Although this great Southern-fried band has never been the same since the death of its leader, Lowell George, in 1979, it always gives an enthusiastic show. March 17: **Black 47** celebrates St. Patrick's Day. March 18: **Ralph Stanley** and his **Clinch Mountain Boys.** Like a bootlegger in the days of old, the banjo picker Stanley roams the small towns in the mountains of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Instead of dropping off moonshine, though, he gathers young musicians and cooks up top-shelf bluegrass. March 19: **BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet.** The Cajun fiddler Doucet and his band heap accordion licks and French lyrics on everything in sight. It's the way these folks have kept their musical culture alive for the past three decades.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—March 16-17: **Levon Helm.** For the past few years, the former Band drummer and vocalist, sometime actor ("Coal Miner's Daughter"), and throat-cancer survivor has been holding intimate concerts at his Woodstock home. This week, he reduces the carbon footprint of metropolitan-area baby boomers by bringing the show to town, along with his rootsy pedigree, deep back catalogue of material, and the promise of surprise guests.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—March 13-14: **Steve Earle** was angering the country-music community with his leftist politics long before the Dixie Chicks did. The self-avowed rocking rebel will be joined by another alt-country artist, **Allison Moorer,** Earle's sixth wife (and seventh marriage; he tied the knot twice with one woman).

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 15: The **Sleepytime Gorilla Museum,** formed from the ashes of the legendary and now sadly defunct Bay Area outfit Idiot Flesh, combines killer musicianship with some truly inspired bombast. Their wildly varied songs—pieces, really—range from manic orchestrations reminiscent of the composer Varèse to staid, haunting vocal melodies accompanied by eerie percussion instruments. March 16: **Blackfield,** led by the multi-instrumentalist Steven Wilson (of the prog rockers Porcupine Tree) and Aviv Geffen, a left-leaning Israeli rock star. March 17: The bawdy Irish rocker **Joe Hurley** and his band Rogue's March lead a cast of thousands (to indulge in a bit of blarney) in a St. Patrick's Day celebration. March 19: **Jesse Malin,** the former front man for the glam rockers D Generation, has grown up to become an accomplished songwriter with more than a few good stories to tell. This show celebrates the release of his latest album, "Glitter in the Gutter."

CANAL ROOM
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—March 17: A benefit for the Thomas P. Cloherty Family Education Fund. Cloherty, who was born on St. Patrick's Day, was an Eagle Scout as a teen-ager, and he went on to become a special agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Stationed in Maine, he died of a heart attack while running in Acadia National Park in December of 2005. He was thirty-seven, and he left behind a wife and four young children. His younger brother is in a local band, **Booga Sugar,** and the party-loving dance rockers are performing in his honor. (For more information, visit www.boogasugar.com.)

CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—March 17: The **Chieftains.** It wouldn't be St. Patrick's Day without a visit from Ireland's musical ambassadors. From their late-fifties work as members of Sean O'Riada's visionary ensemble Ceoltoiri Chualann to the years of collaboration with the likes of Van Morrison, James Galway, and Mick Jagger, these instrumental wizards have been doing for traditional Irish music what Bill Monroe did for the rural American string band—treating it with a respect that lifts it well above any salt-of-the-earth sentimentality. March 20: The legendary Brazilian songwriter **Gilberto Gil** settles in for a solo acoustic show. He'll be performing renditions of music from throughout his career, which stretches back to the late-sixties tropicalia movement, as he does on his latest U.S. release, "Gil Luminoso."

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 14: Named after the Egyptian goddess of fertility, the Boston-based band **Isis** gives birth to dense post-rock. The music, as heavy as the unwieldiest of metal, is informed by a brooding intellectual sensibility. Your father's Van Halen this is not. March 19: **Daughtry,** the self-referencing band of the "American Idol" alumnus Chris Daughtry, follows in the grand tradition of ersatz grunge bands like Fuel and Creed.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 14: The all-girl bluegrass band **Uncle Earl** celebrates the release of its latest album, "Waterloo, Tennessee." Their energetic take on old-time music has created a mass of devoted fans from some distinguished quarters: their new CD was produced by John Paul Jones, of Led Zeppelin. Later that night: the Colombian vocalist **Lucia Pulido.** March 15-16: The **Kodo** drummers are a troupe from Sado Island, in the Sea of Japan, that beats out primal rhythms on a variety of instruments. Also on March 16 and on March 18: The spiky-haired performance-art pioneer **Laurie Anderson.** March 19-20: The droll character actress **Jackie Hoffman** ("Hairspray") had a long-running hit here with "The Kvetching Continues." In her new cabaret act, "Jackie with a Z," the kvetching continues at a higher pitch, as Hoffman riffs on everything from endangered species and Barbra Streisand to her recent hysterectomy.

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE WAY IT WAS

It's unlikely that history will locate Henry Clay Anderson, a Greenville, Mississippi, studio photographer most active in the fifties and sixties, alongside Harlem's James VanDerZee, Paris's Nadar, Mali's Seydou Keïta, and others who turned commercial portraiture into an art. But Anderson's pictures of middle-class Southern blacks in the civil-rights era are full of matter-of-fact revelations. A show at Kasher includes portraits of men and women dressed up for the prom, the office, or Sunday services, and posed in Anderson's spare storefront studio. Some of these same people appear in a crowd gathered to mourn the Reverend George Lee, whose efforts to register black voters ended with his assassination, in 1955. Segregation and intimidation were the backdrop against which Anderson's subjects stood—determined, unbowed. "I made pictures of things that to me were amazing," Anderson said late in life. Nothing is more amazing than the steady passage from endurance to resistance that he records here.

—*Vince Aletti*

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 20: The Japanese all-girl quartet **Ooioo** was born out of a photo shoot in 1997. Its leader, a musician named Yoshimi, is a drummer and vocalist for the joyfully noisy band the Boredoms as well as an inspiration for the Flaming Lips' 2002 album, "Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots." She pulled the band together after posing with a few friends holding guitars, and Ooioo (which is pronounced "oh-oh-eye-oh-oh") brings a similar playful spirit to its music, which ranges from heavy psychedelic romps to spacey atmospheric strolls. And they've been known to show up wearing fluorescent body paint.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—March 17: Neil Michael Hagerty, a storied indie-rock veteran, returns with his latest band, **Howling Hex.** The former Pussy Galore and Royal Trux vocalist and guitarist stays true to his two loves: stripped-down, gritty rock and envelope-pushing, avant-garde weirdness. The constant tug-of-war between these two passions keeps Hagerty's work compelling and unpredictable.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—March 16-17: **Celtic Woman,** featuring four young female Irish singers and a fiddler, puts a polished gloss on traditional Celtic tunes as well as more contemporary fare like Enya's "Orinoco Flow" and the theme from "The Lord of the Rings." The group, which was put together by a "Riverdance" veteran and a few Irish entrepreneurs for a PBS television special a few years ago, has been a smashing success.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—March 14-15 and March 17: The **Pogues,** one of the greatest disreputable bands in rock history. The group's brilliant and dissipated original songwriter and lead singer, Shane MacGowan, who has made an art out of drunkenly winging it, returned to the fold a few years ago after a decade or so on his own.

ROULETTE
20 Greene St. (212-219-8242)—The guitarist **John King,** the leader of the avant-jazz and blues group King Kortette, composes for such venerated dance companies as Merce Cunningham and the Stuttgart Ballet as well as for new-music ensembles like the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Kronos Quartet, and Ethel. The show here on March 16 features the pianist **Jenny Lin,** performing selections from King's work "Rubai'yat," accompanied by live electronics. King will also be leading a string ensemble, with improvisation involving the use of dice.

THEATRE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—March 14: The **Shins** have vaulted from being a small cult band to enjoying near household-name status after being mentioned by Natalie Portman's character in Zach Braff's 2004 comedy, "Garden State." (Being on the Grammy-winning soundtrack didn't hurt, either.) Their latest album, "Wincing the Night Away," builds on the band's signature wistful indie pop.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 14: **Inlets,** a side project of Sebastian Kruger, from My Brightest Diamond. With **Edison Woods.** Led by Julia Frodahl, a singer with a breathy, lithe delivery, this local ensemble crafts melodramatic chamber pop with a spooky edge. March 19: **Ceramic Dog** is Marc Ribot's fearsome power trio featuring two creative young collaborators, Shahzad Ismaily, on bass and Moog, and Ches Smith, on drums. The band covers a lot of territory, from spare, haunting compositions led by Ribot's reverb-drenched guitar and unadorned vocals, to (much more frequently) heavy, odd-metered power-rock pieces driven by Smith's Bonhamlike intensity.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—The **Fab Faux** is a Beatles cover band featuring Will Lee, of "The Late Show with David Letterman," and Jimmy Vivino, of "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." They throw in a fifth vocalist to help with the complicated studio arrangements of the Beatles' later output. On March 13 and March 14, they go their separate ways, stylistically at least, with a show focussing on the solo years of the legendary foursome's members. March 20: **Explosions in the Sky,** an instrumental rock band from Texas, traffics in compositions with a cinematic scope.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 17: A night of Sufi songs and ghazals from Pakistan, with the vocalist **Shafqat Ali Khan.** (Skirball Center, New York University, 566 LaGuardia Pl., at Washington Sq. S. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—March 17: The mandolinist **Chris Thile,** of Nickel Creek, stops by with his new string band, the Tensions Mountain Boys. March 18: **Alarm Will Sound,** a twenty-person ensemble that came out of Rochester's Eastman School of Music, plays a rich repertoire of works by John Cage, Steve Reich, Frank Zappa, and other twentieth-century composers. They also have a penchant for orchestrating electronic music, as they did on the 2005 album "Acoustica," which featured the work of Aphex Twin. Their latest challenge is a marathon performance of works by Aphex Twin, John Adams, the orchestra members Stefan Freund and Dennis DeSantis, the British electronic duo Autechre, and others. (Both shows are part of the "In Your Ear Redux" festival; see Classical Music.)

ZEBULON
258 Wythe Ave., between Metropolitan Ave. and N. 3rd St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-218-6934)—March 16: Brooklyn's tireless **Hungry March Band** wears out dancers and their shoes alike with a brass-meets-every-musical-style-under-the-sun approach.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 14-17: The **Steve Kuhn** trio. In 1986, the veteran pianist Steve Kuhn recorded a live album with **Al Foster** and **Ron Carter.** Twenty years later, they reunited, and that performance has been captured on "Live at Birdland," a new album that shows that their agreeably symbiotic relationship is intact.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—March 14-18: The pianist **Eddie Palmieri,** the dean of Latin jazz, along with the trombonist **Conrad Herwig** and the trumpeter **Brian Lynch,** add rhythmic spice to the lustrous compositions of the saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

BRIC STUDIO
57 Rockwell Pl., Brooklyn (718-855-7882, ext. 53)—March 15 and March 17: The saxophonist and composer **Roy Nathanson** and the **Jazz Passengers** take on the music of the Supremes, for a program that will be polished and reprised this summer, in Prospect Park.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 31, the singer **Jane Monheit,** whose new album, "Surrender," concentrates on light-textured standards and bossa nova.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—March 13-18: On his new album, "Love Is What Stays," **Mark Murphy** brings his distinctive powers of vocal transformation to an eclectic program, mixing standards with songs by Coldplay and Johnny Cash.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—March 15-18: A British prog-rock stalwart with a fondness for fusion, **Alan Holdsworth** is revered by guitar geeks who swear by his dexterous and inventive fretboard excursions. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

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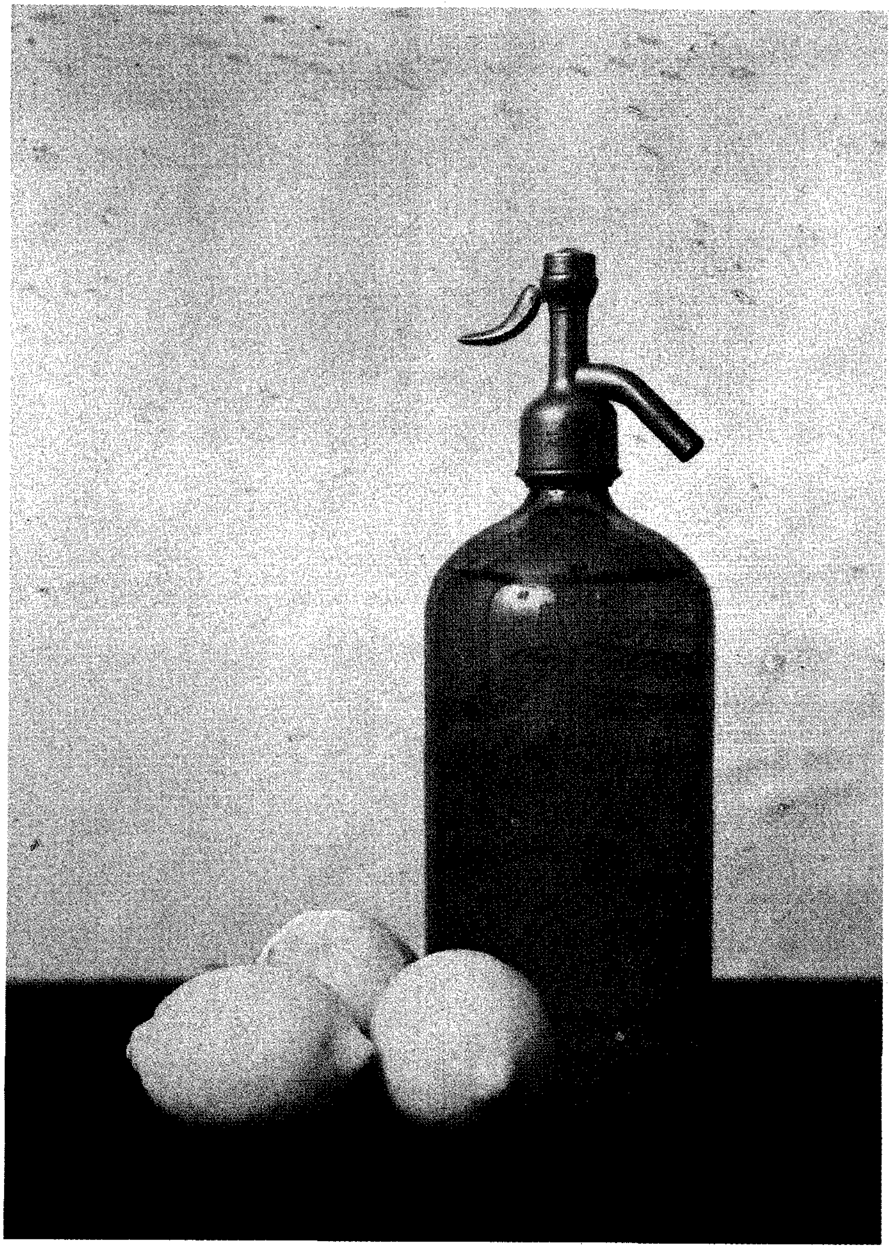
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—March 15-18: **Ken Peplowski,** arguably the finest mainstream clarinet player (and a sleek saxophonist as well), receives royal support from a trio featuring the pianist **Bill Charlap.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—March 13-18: The **Heath Brothers.** The death, two years ago, of the bassist Percy Heath hasn't stopped the saxophonist Jimmy Heath and the drummer Albert (Tootie) Heath from continuing with the band. The pianist **Jeb Patton** and the bassist **Peter Washington** round out the group here. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Barcelona and Modernity: Gaudí to Dalí."** Through June 3. ♦ **"Flowing Streams: Scenes from Japanese Art and Life"** explores the country's artistic relationship to its aquatic abundance. Traditional works include screens and scrolls with river scenes, illuminated pages from the eighteenth-century "Tales of Ise," and kimonos and Noh costumes with water motifs. Among the newer works are vessels by contemporary ceramic masters like Matsui Kosei and Tokuda Yasokichi III and the meditative "Water Stone," a sculpture-cum-fountain by Isamu Noguchi. Then, of course, there are the obligatory works by Hokusai and Hiroshige, the leading makers of the ukiyo-e prints that heavily influenced Western artists like Manet and Degas. Through June 3. ♦ **"Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall: An Artist's Country Estate."** An eighty-four-room Art Nouveau fantasia, Louis Comfort Tiffany's Laurelton Hall was built in 1905 in Oyster Bay, on Long Island Sound. Before it burned down, in 1957, its treasures were parcelled out to various collections; regathered here, they establish an atmosphere of swooning luxury. Aestheticism effloresces in paintings, watercolors, Favrile vases, stained-glass windows, enamels, lamps, and even the complete "Daffodil Terrace," an elaborate pergola with glass-bouquet capitals topping marble columns. Interspersed are items from Tiffany's myriad collections, including Chinese porcelains, Japanese sword guards, called tsubas (he owned two thousand of these), Turkish tiles, Indian teaks, and Native American basketry and beadwork from the Northwest coast. Through May 20. ♦ **"Discovering Tutankhamun: The Photographs of Harry Burton."** Through April 29. ♦ **"Accordions and Harmonicas of the Nineteenth Century."** Through March 31. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Closed Circuit: Video and New Media at the Metropolitan."** A sampling of works from the museum's small but growing collection of video art; among the artists represented are Ann Hamilton, David Hammons, Jim Campbell, Darren Almond, and Maria Marshall. Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)


Emmanuel Sougez's still-life (1926-28) is in a show of autochromes at Kraus.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Armando Reverón"** is a beguiling retrospective of a Venezuelan painter, hardly known in North America, who died in 1954, at the age of sixty-five. Reverón was an idiosyncratic modernist, winsomely mad. He spent most of his life in a jerry-built beach compound with a female companion, selling his art to tourists. In addition to his paintings, he made tangy Dadaistic sculpture, including life-size dolls that he regarded as friends. Dainty and coarse, his painting style developed from filmy and skittery all-white landscapes, often on burlap, through sepia-toned nudes to picturesque harbor views and vigorously rumpled self-portraits. His nudes of the thirties are terrific: shadowy bodies like sensual fever dreams. Through April 16. ♦ **"Abbas Kiarostami: Image Maker."** Through May 28. ♦ **"Artistic Collaborations: Fifty Years at Universal Limited Art Editions."** Tatyana Grosman founded the U.L.A.E. workshop on Long Island in 1957; in the years since, hundreds of artists—among them Susan Rothenberg, Jasper Johns, Barnett Newman, Kiki Smith, and Richard Tuttle—have made prints with the master craftsmen there. Through May 21. ♦ **"Live/Work: Performance Into Drawing."** Works on paper that relate to performance-art pieces. Through May 7. ♦ **"Jeff Wall,"** a mid-career survey of the Canadian photographer's work. Through May 14. ♦ **"Comic Abstraction: Image Making, Image Breaking."** Through June 11. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The wide-ranging survey **"Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso: Time, Truth, and Memory"** (a small Goya, depicting a trio of nude figures, gives the show its title) is organized into centuries-spanning chapters like "The Domestic World" and "Weeping Women," emphasizing thematic commonalities that might have been obscured in a chronological display. One walks from a group of portraits of monks to still-lifes featuring freshly killed game to scenes of bullfights, and it's as if a fatalist Catholicism has bled over into culinary and sporting realms; a memento-mori skull (and there are many here) doesn't look so different from a butchered sheep's head, and their meanings don't seem so far apart. The roster of artists is impressive, and there's an airy feeling to the installation. The Zurbaráns and Murillos, Velázquezes and Cotáns have plenty of room to stretch and preen, and the conversation among them can be wonderful. Through March 28. ♦ Work by Tacita Dean, the 2006 recipient of the Hugo Boss Prize for contemporary art, is on view through June 6. ♦ **"Family Pictures"** showcases contemporary photography and video depicting families and children; among the artists included are Patty Chang, Loretta Lux, Sally Mann, Gregory Crewdson, Gillian Wearing, and Thomas Struth. Through April 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—The early seventies are in the air, with a trifecta of Robert Moses shows and the "High Times, Hard Times" survey of overlooked painting. But no better primer exists on art from the era of Watergate and "Ford to City: Drop Dead" than the small but packed retrospective **"Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure."** Matta-Clark is a tricky subject for history. He completed one hectic decade of mature work before dying of cancer, at age thirty-five, in 1978. His major works—abandoned buildings cut into walk-in sculpture—

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have all been demolished. What remains are films, photocollages, drawings, and sculptural fragments of the building cuts. But even in their capacity as remnants, these tell a vivid story of brash and savvy adventures in what Matta-Clark called "anarchitecture." Especially valuable is the chance to see a quorum of the films, screening right where they belong, in the galleries among the other documents. Through June 7. ♦ **"Lorna Simpson,"** a twenty-year survey of the artist's photographs and videos addressing issues of race and gender in American history. Through May 6. ♦ Terence Koh's one-room work comprises a single four-thousand-watt bulb in a lamp pointed at viewers, a withering assault on the senses. The work is rife with metaphors, particularly of the Icarian stripe, but ultimately it's a bit short on substance. Through May 27. ♦ **"Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Eye of the Artist: The Work of Devorah Sperber."** Through May 6. ♦ **"Landscapes from the Age of Impressionism."** Americans were big buyers of Impressionist art, which explains the depth of Stateside museum holdings. The Brooklyn Museum sifts through its collection to mount this pleasing, if not groundbreaking, midwinter show of landscapes by European and American practitioners of the genre. The Monets include the lavender-tinged "Houses of Parliament, Effect of Sunlight" (1903) and "The Doge's Palace in Venice," and they're joined by works from Impressionist standard-bearers like Sisley, Pissarro, and Renoir, and from proto-Impressionists like Charles-François Daubigny. The American artists include John Singer Sargent, understandably better known for his portraiture; William Glackens, represented by a local scene, "Bathing at Bellport, Long Island"; and Willard Leroy Metcalf, whose "Early Spring Afternoon, Central Park" strikes a wistful note. Through May 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ The walk-through vivarium at **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is filled with hundreds of lepidoptera, who light on cut fruit, lush vegetation, and visitors. Through May 28. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS
Audubon Terrace, Broadway at 155th St. (212-368-5900)—The Academy's annual **Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts** includes work by David Salle, Dana Schutz, Bryan Hunt, Sally Mann, Joe Fig, Alexi Worth, Sarah Oppenheimer, and more than two dozen others. Through April 1. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, 1 to 4.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Glass, Gilding, and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642)."** Through May 20. ♦ You may remember Yuken Teruyu as the small-scale, pastoral silhouette maker whose dioramas cut from single paper bags were shown in 2005 at P.S. 1's "Greater New York." For **"Free Fish,"** he presents a quartet of mind-bogglingly precise 3-D trees (this set employs paper bags from McDonald's Happy Meals), along with an installation composed around a Ming-dynasty jar decorated with goldfish and lilies. Using just five safety-orange deli bags and a few lengths of wire, Teruyu evokes the listless drifting of koi in a pond; some of the bags are poised on arced wires, and they sway delicately in the breezes generated by opening doors and air vents. Tiny fish silhouettes excised in the bags are barely evident except as gaps in the orange shadows cast on the floor. A *bingata*-stencilled kimono repeats the motifs. Almost effortless, but startlingly evocative. Through April 29. ♦ For the exhibition **"Collectors' Choice,"** thirteen Asian-art aficionados from around the country have loaned the cream of their collections. Don't miss the Yongle-era Ming-dynasty ceramics: the white-glazed ewer and vase with barely perceptible incised patterns of flowers are marvels of elegance and restraint. Through Aug. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—Part art exhibition, part public-service announcement, **"Dangerous Beauty"** reminds us that—surprise!—worrying too much about one's appearance can degenerate into serious pathology. Where ancient poets made obsessions with beauty sound kind of sexy, the modern-day Narcissuses in these images are a battle-worn crew with scars, collagen-damaged lips, and emaciated frames. Some of the objects, like Beth B.'s wax models of ruptured breast implants, could be in Philadelphia's Mütter Museum of medical curiosities. Lauren Greenfield's photographs of women with eating disorders function like emotive-trigger journalism. Others, like Marilyn Minter's simultaneously voluptuous and grotesque paintings or Barbara Kruger's iconic text-and-photo work, offer a more metaphorical critique of a culture's sick demands. Through April 21. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Design Life Now: National Design Triennial 2006."** Through July 29. ♦ **"Made to Scale: Staircase Masterpieces."** A collection of staircase models, mostly from nineteenth-century France. Through June 3. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)— An exhibition that coincides with the publication of a new book, **"Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré"** seeks to expand the reputation of this academic nineteenth-century painter. Doré (1832-83) was best known in his time for illustrating books like Dante's Inferno and Cervantes's "Don Quixote"—as well as the Bible—but he was a painter and sculptor as well. Images like the "Massacre of the Innocents" and "Moses Before the Pharaoh" show Doré's draftsmanship chops and provide what mainstream nineteenth-century art lovers, just like twenty-first-century movie fans, adored: violence (implied or otherwise), sexual titillation, and implications of heroism in the face of death. Through April 22. ♦ **"Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"George Stubbs (1724-1806): A Celebration."** Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Martin Munkacsi: Think While You Shoot!"** Through April 29. ♦ **"Henri Cartier-Bresson's Scrapbook: Photographs, 1932-46."** Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Ada Katz is the perfect postmodern muse. In **"Alex Katz Paints Ada,"** she appears in nearly fifty years of portraits, attired in little black dresses, swimsuits, and an array of fabulous sunglasses. The irony is that even though she's a central icon in Katz's œuvre she remains a cipher. Rendered in Katz's signature flat color and simply drawn shapes that tease the line between abstraction and representation, she is both Ada Katz and a mere painted subject, barely more significant than a tree, a chair, or a fetching, well-painted scarf. Through March 18. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"A City on Paper: Saul Steinberg's New York."** Through March 25. ♦ **"Robert Moses and the Modern City: Remaking the Metropolis."** Through May 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—The late sixties and early seventies were rough on ambitious painters. Women and people of color were actively exploring two-dimensional abstraction, but the "real" artists were sculptors; painting was dead. It was revived, of course, but the taboo on work from the era has remained. **"High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975"** breaks the moratorium, and as revisionist history the show is a blast from the past and a breath of fresh air. Color pullulates. Moiré patterns, TV color bars, musical structures, and rules-based composition assert influence, as do performance and, undeniably, sculpture. Canvases are shaped, pierced, draped on armatures, spread on the floor, hung in the air (Yayoi Kusama even paints on the surface of a pond). Among the participants: Jo Baer, Lynda Benglis, Ron Gorchov, Harmony Hammond, Lee Lozano, Alan Shields, and Joan Snyder. Through April 22. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—An "unfortunate allergy to the commercial aspects of art" inspired P.S. 1's founder, Alanna Heiss, to assemble **"Not for Sale,"** which she did by calling up artists and asking them to exhibit a work that, for whatever reason, they would not consider converting into cash. Not all could identify one. Those who did—including Shahzia Sikander, Luis Gispert, Maya Lin, Christo, Jasper Johns, and Stephen Shore—kept particular pieces for particular reasons: the work succeeded specially, or failed; it was a gift or a memorial, or heralded a sea change in studio practice. The backstories are explained in segments of interviews posted on wall labels, the gestalt of which is less an antimarket manifesto than an essay on the workaday tenderness felt by the maker for the made. Through April 16. ♦ Daily at 12:30, the rotating ensemble in **"Emergency Room"** (more than thirty artists, of various nationalities) unveils work responding to news from the previous twenty-four hours. Understandably, the majority of these are small works on paper, along with quickie videos and photographs. (P.S. 1 archives each day's output online.) The room looks crappy, but in a good way: the real-time energy runs high. A recent afternoon yielded a newsprint broadside on the sale of Starrett City, a mock-marketing presentation of T-shirt and baseball-cap designs for the Obama campaign ("Barack n roll!"), and a tacked-up clipping from the *Times*, listing service personnel newly killed in Iraq, the ages of the dead illumined in highlighter: 21, 22, 21, 21, 22, 26, 27. Through March 19. ♦ **"Vik Muniz: Reflex."** Through May 7. ♦ **"Abbas Kiarostami: Image Maker."** Through April 29. ♦ **"Katrín Sigurdardóttir: High Plane Five."** Through May 7. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

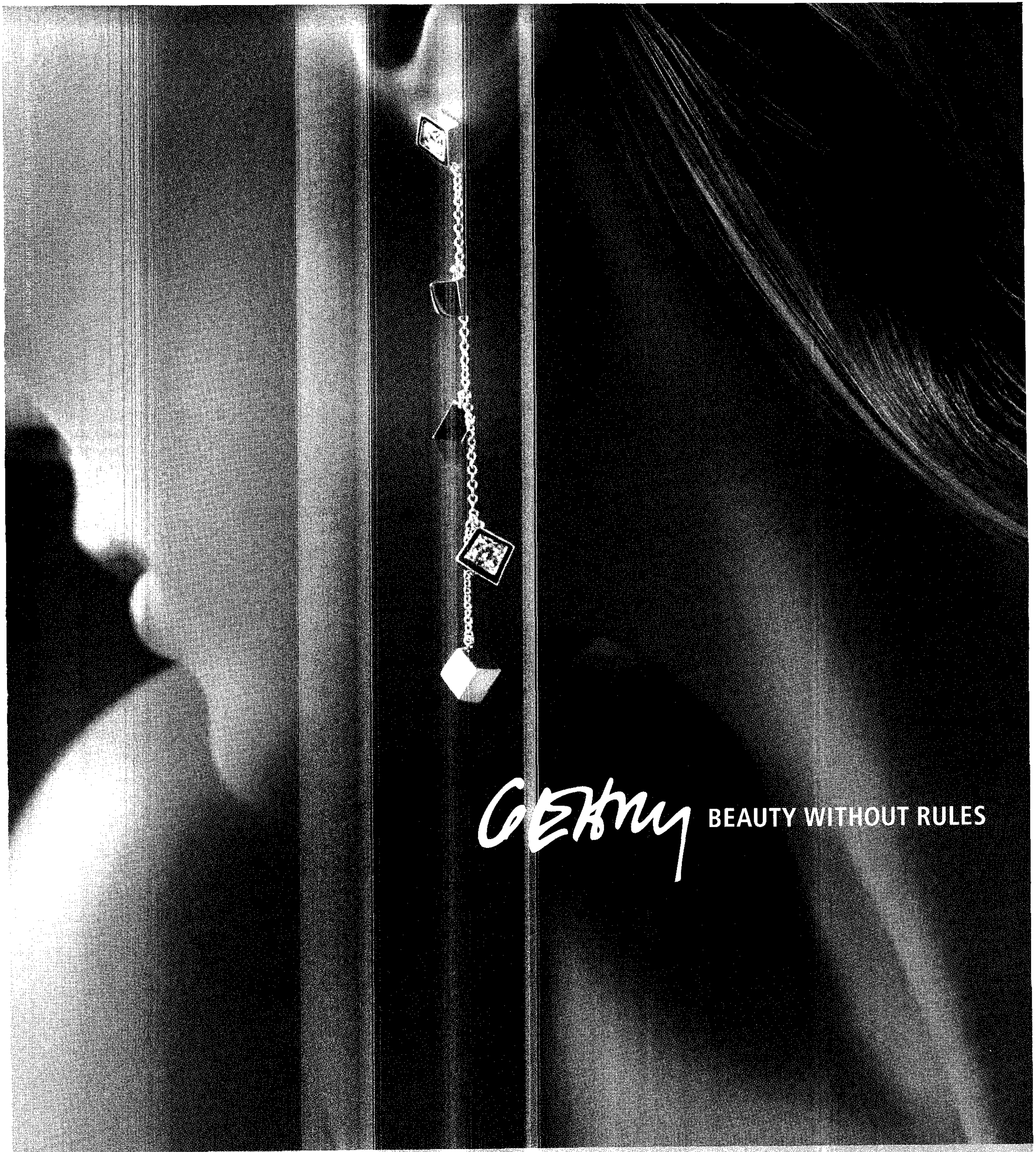
STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Inconsolable Memories,"** by Stan Douglas, the Canadian master of recondite film and video, montages scraps and elaborately produced reënactments of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's classic movie "Memories of Underdevelopment" (1968), about a bourgeois intellectual adrift in post-revolutionary Cuba. The time switches from the Bay of Pigs era to the 1980 Mariel boatlift, which the hero, at the last minute, declines to join. He is trapped, perhaps for eternity, in a bleak existential fiction with urgent but ungraspable political import. Also shown are Douglas's recent, spectacular color photographs of dilapidated relics of pre-revolutionary Havana, such as a movie palace now used as a carpentry workshop. Through March 18. ♦ **"Africa Comics."** Through March 18. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

UKRAINIAN MUSEUM
222 E. 6th St. (212-228-0110)—**"Crossroads: Modernism in Ukraine 1910-1930."** Through April 29. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11:30 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

JOSEPH BEUYS
A small show of drawings and sculptures by the influential German conceptualist and per-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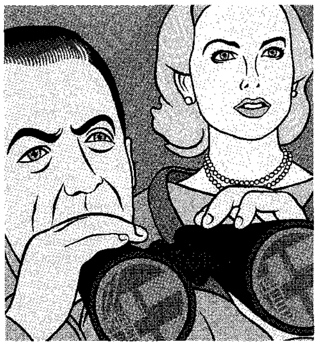
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
REFLECTIVE ELEMENTS

The globe-trotting photographer James Stewart, his leg broken and in a cast (he has a furious itch that he can never quite reach), sits in his Greenwich Village apartment, staring gleefully through a telephoto lens



at the personal problems of his neighbors across a garden courtyard. He has female visitors—the salty Thelma Ritter, a nurse, who rubs him down, and the glamorous Grace Kelly, who shows up bearing food from "21" and more sexual desire than he can handle. Alfred Hitchcock's masterly "Rear Window" (1954), from the screenplay by John Michael Hayes (based on a Cornell Woolrich story), has never gone stale. (Moving Image is screening it on March 17, in its "Fashion in Film" series.) It is, as everyone knows, a supreme rebuke to the dubious morality of the spectator, who sits in the dark in what he assumes is safety. But it's also one of the great films about sexuality and fear. Everything that Stewart sees across the courtyard—loneliness, marital entrapment, murder—reflects his own fantasies or terrors. The voyeur ends up spying on his own life, and it comes back at him and almost destroys him.

—David Denby

formance artist addresses themes of systems and connections. In the front room, some drawings take on the look of flow charts, and three glass-covered chalkboards are filled with notes and diagrams from a 1978 performance-lecture. There's more fun to be had in back, with the sculptures. A pair of rhinoceros horns are attached with gauze bandages to plastic tubing full of red liquid, and a heavy black telephone's snaking cord loops behind an uncommunicative clod of dirt and grass. Many of Beuys's works are, decades on, much the worse for wear; witness a pair of greasy cardboard boxes brimful of yellow margarine and felt. In their own mute and creeping ways, these objects carry on the work of performance long after their creator's demise. Through March 31. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

ALINE KOMINSKY CRUMB
The graphic memoir "Need More Love"—a fat volume rich with comic panels, text, and photographs—collects the compleat Aline Kominsky Crumb. The exhibition of the same name is modest by comparison, presenting only a handful of comics and a few collages. In these roundly drawn, densely verbal drawings, though, the inimitable Mrs. Crumb can tawk to her heart's content. Obsessions—Paris, cute underwear, Jews' love of Chinese food—remain consistent, even as the brief selection narrates something like a bildungsroman, beginning on Long Island in the early seventies "in horror, yumiliation, and embarrassment" and ending in the present with something like happiness. Through March 17. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

Short List

JOSEPH MILLS: Cohen Amador, 41 E. 57th St. 212-759-6740. Through March 17. **ROBERT RYMAN:** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through April 7. **LORD SNOWDON:** Godel & Co., 39A E. 72nd St. 212-288-7272. Through April 21. **PHILIP TAAFFE:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through March 31. **"AUTOCHROMES: THE DAWN OF COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY":** Kraus, 962 Park Ave., at 82nd St. 212-794-2064. Through April 6.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

FRANCIS ALŸS
In 1948, Moshe Dayan drew the Green Line partitioning Palestine in grease pencil on a map. How wide would the line be, and how would it look if it were actually drawn on the land? Alÿs takes this non-innocent question as the basis for a performance-cum-installation that he calls "Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic." Incorporated in the show is a film of the 1995 performance in which Alÿs walked the line carrying a leaking can of green paint, spilling a skinny squiggle across desert, highway, and neighborhood. A table covered with maps, sketches, notes, photographs, and tiny paintings considers the partition from multiple vantages, while the rest of the room is a field of toy machine guns built from scrap wood and film reels. Through March 17. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

MANFREDI BENINATI
A collection of candy-colored paintings veil landscapes and familiar-seeming interiors with drips, agate stripes, and aurora-borealis glows. They're dreamy and lovely, like looking at the world through a rainbow prism. In the front, an installation depicts what seems to be a therapist's office gone to seed, with years of repressed desperation finally popping out. The surrounding set is perfectly plausible (radiator, worn paperbacks on a shelf, swivelly office chairs, wallpaper), but the desk has been taken over by a turretted sandcastle, with an empty wine bottle and a full ashtray nearby. Wonder abounds. Through March 17. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

VALIE EXPORT
The Austrian artist Valie Export (neé Waltraud Hollinger) is best known for her late-sixties performances, which set out to shock the Viennese bourgeoisie and confront the rigid sexism of the reigning Actionist avant-garde. Her recent work is a toned-down version of those earlier exercises, which included entering a porn theatre and asking men if they wanted to see a real woman's anatomy, and wearing a box around her torso with holes that passersby could reach through, merging the idea of private fantasies and public space. Here, hollowed-out heads (like armor without the body inside), film projections of marred bodies, and sound pieces with fragmented speech offer more oblique experiences than the earlier performances but continue the discussion of violence and power. Through March 24. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 212-807-9494.)

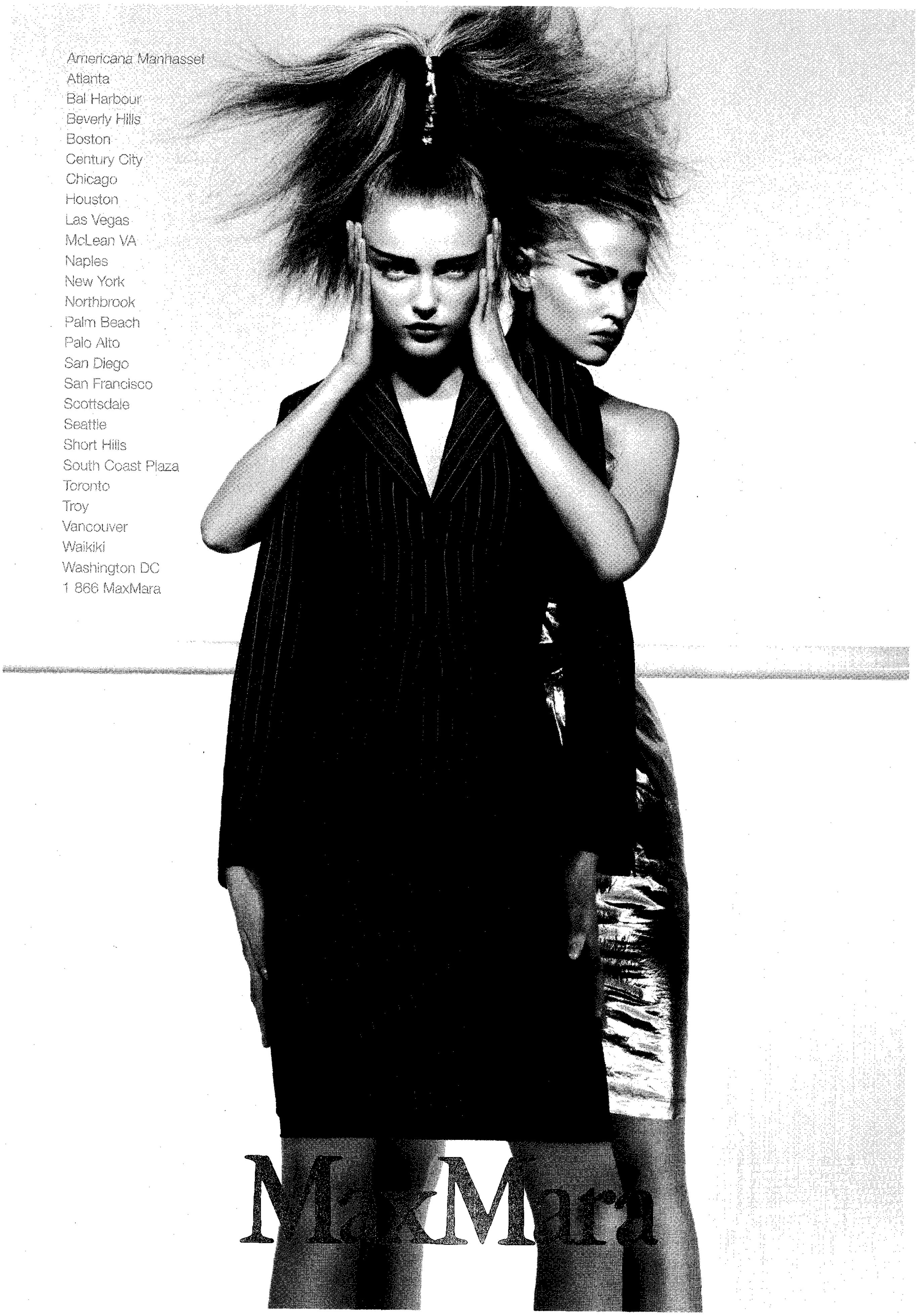
ISA GENZKEN
Genzken's flashy assemblages feature wheelchairs, recliners, and beach umbrellas tarted up in Day-Glo fabric swatches, swathes of paint, and shards of mirror to suggest a garish hell of convalescent leisure. Through March 17. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

RACHEL HARRISON
If Harrison's installation of new sculptures—created out of plywood, lumpy Parex stucco, mannequins, and cheap found objects—initially strikes you as another airing of the emperor's new clothes, give it some time. Rather than following the anything-goes edict of post-Duchampian sculpture, Harrison is rigorously rethinking tropes from figurative sculpture to heroic minimalism to homespun feminism. The works are titled after famous men and include nice touches like an Arnold Palmer-endorsed drink embedded in the surface of "Tiger Woods" or a can of Slim-Fast perched on top of the tall, Louise Nevelson-like "Fats Domino." Even the show's title, "If I Did It," after the infamous O. J. Simpson project, plays with fact and fiction, or art's version of it: representation and reality. Through March 31. (Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

HUANG YONG PING
A founder of China's Xiamen Dada group presents truly startling sculptures; read no further if you like your adrenaline kicks undiluted. Nine ceramic pots, all about five feet tall and in the standard vase shape, stand in the front of the gallery. Visitors enter, casually look at the vessels, then shriek and recoil when they catch a glimpse of what is inside—taxidermied goats, deer, and dogs peek up from the depths, and two pots are lined with flocks of bats and birds. If you think art is about visceral response, go: Huang has it nailed. Farther back, two room-filling ceramic models, one of the Pentagon and one of the Colosseum, are gently overgrown with ivies, ferns, small shrubs, and saplings. These are more cerebral, but still unsettling, and the question of whether these buildings are being overcome or are the sources of grand flourishing is not resolved. Through March 17. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

RICHARD JACKSON
Jackson could be considered the art world's Tom Clancy, a gun enthusiast whose sculptural installations carry overtones of excess, crime, and conspiracy, if not outright apocalypse. Jackson's first show with Yvon Lambert, in the gallery's glossy new digs, is an unsettling confection titled "The War Room," featuring plastic ducks in military uniforms, paint-spraying devices attached to their orifices. In the old space, a wall painting titled "The Bedroom" remakes an anarchic scene originally created in the artist's studio. The similarities between Jackson and other California artists like Paul McCarthy are strong, but there's an unpredictable, backwoods zaniness about Jackson that makes him simultaneously scarier and harder to pin down, a bit like

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN



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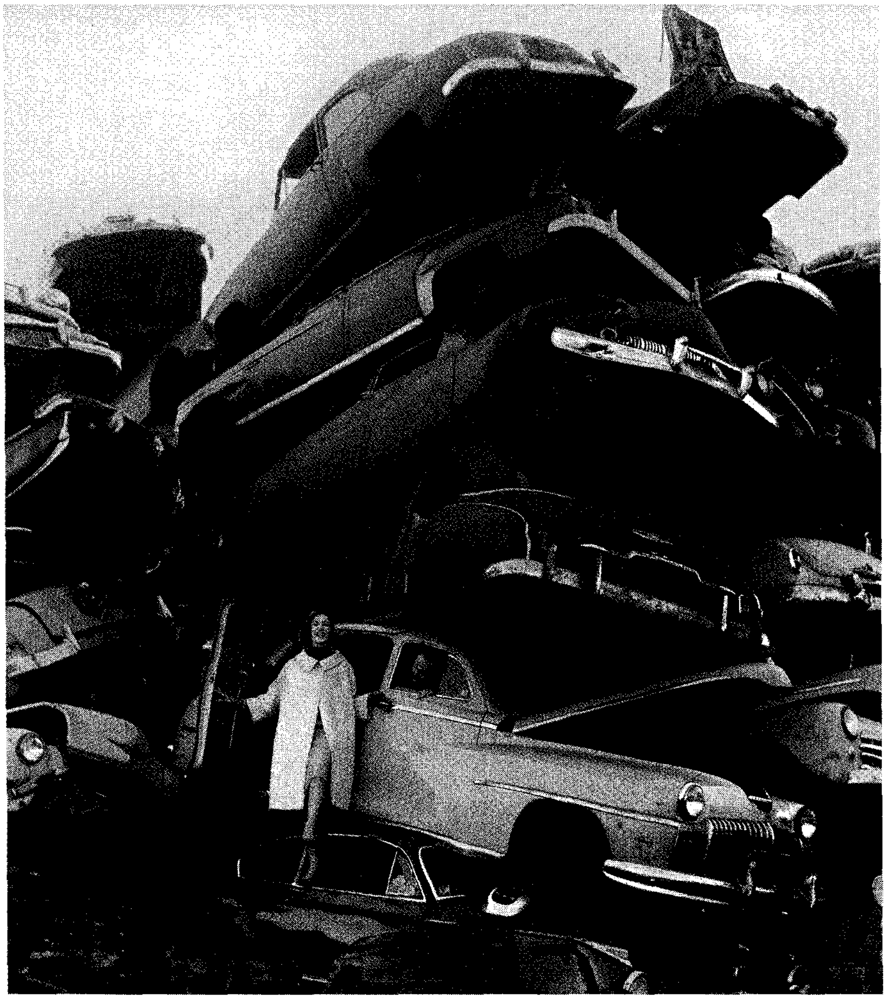
a convict on the lam. Through March 22. (550 W. 21st St. and 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611.)

SARAH ANNE JOHNSON

For "The Galapagos Project," this Vancouver-based artist drew on the experiences of two trips to replant and rehabilitate the islands, which she both recorded in photographs and re-created in her studio in the form of small-scale sculptural tableaux. Photos of these tableaux are hung alongside documentary images in a salon-style installation that sprawls across the entire gallery. Shooting real people and Sculpey figures with the same sense of comradely enthusiasm and commitment, Johnson seduces viewers into a vicarious trip that includes cuddling with seals, swimming with sharks, and sharing a communal wooden cabin, a scale-model replica of which caps this utterly entertaining show. Through March 24. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)



A 1957 photograph by Lord Snowdon, taken in a Queens junk yard, at Godel & Co.

TOBA KHEDOORI

Khedoori coats huge sheets of paper with wax, scrapes them smooth, and paints their gummy, luminous surfaces with crisply architectonic depictions of everyday things. New in this body of work is her use of black wax in addition to clear, and a trompe-l'oeil quotient dialled up numerous notches. The bark on a pile of logs flips from flatness to illusionistic relief, and one has to come surprisingly close to the flames in a fireplace, or a series of windows, set against inky black backgrounds, before one feels confident that the fire is not photographic and the windows are not real cutouts. Through March 17. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

CHARLES LEDRAY

The charm of miniaturizing can be treacherous for an artist—it showcases technical skill at the risk of stinting on content. It seems churlish to cavil about LeDray's exquisitely handmade tiny catcher's mask, toybox, bunch of flip-flops, or row of trophy hats (among them a wee cheesehead). But why are these things compelling, except that they must have been incredibly difficult to produce? Two related works achieve deeper complexity—a little hall tree hung with jean jacket, army trenchcoat, and woolly coat with gloves stuffed in the pocket, and a bed piled with various outerwear, as at a party in a funky loft. A nice hint of the uncanny hovers here, in the implied vision of hipsters crafting doll clothes for their mini-selves. Through March 24. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

SARAH MORRIS

Splashy, prismatic paintings that continue Morris's investigations into the relationship between painting and architecture are hung alongside compositions built up from the unmistakable interlocking circles of the Olympics logo. This foray into Leroy Neimanesque graphics carries the title of "Beijing" (site of the 2008 summer games), and evokes the cloverleaf construction of new highways in burgeoning cities along the way. Morris's other métier is film. Here she unveils a paean to Robert Towne, the celebrated screenwriter who won an Academy Award for "Chinatown." Towne's musings on filmmaking and Hollywood in the seventies are interesting, and the film's slick gloss matches that of the rest of her work. Surface aside, though, the relationship between her films and paintings is vague at best. Through March 17. (Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

TONY OURSLER

Oursler has yet to duplicate the eerie, uncanny brilliance of his early-ish video sculptures, in which he projected images of distended and distorted faces and bodies onto simple cloth surfaces and accompanied them with scary-hilarious soundtracks. The artist still mines the heavy film-crit vein, attempting to duplicate in objects the way media images affect and reflect the human psyche. The large-scale works here—brightly colored slabs of aluminum cut into shapes resembling paint splatters or Rorschach inkblots—include video monitors embedded in their surfaces with eyes that stare and blink back at the viewer. It's a funny trope, but still not as effective or chilling as his earlier ghosts in the machine talking back at the viewer. Through March 24. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

LARRY POONS

Poons, a veteran of the New York School who has gone through many transformations, is, in his seventieth year, making abstract paintings that look as sprightly and energetic as any he's made so far. Filled with bright, impatient squiggles of impasto, the paintings carry impressionistic titles like "And Nude and Angel," "Playing Hammers," and "Lady from Augusta." One senses that these were tacked on at the last moment—and even if they weren't, Poons has studiously avoided the literary, descriptive, and mimetic aspects of painting in lieu of classic Ab Ex tropes like gesture. In other words, don't think too hard; just feel the color, the line, and the movement of his brush sinking in through your retinas and tickling your unconscious. Through March 17. (Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227.)

SIMON STARLING

Starling is an artist (a 2005 Turner Prize winner, no less), but he could also pass as some kind of interdisciplinary social scientist. His work usually includes a complex recounting of the arcane historical, social, political, and economic developments that inform his spare presentations of objects. This show offers a few more visual rewards, in the form of a pretty wooden canoe and a slide show. To make sense of it all, there's the expected dense and circular text explaining their connections to the ancient symbol of the ouroboros (a snake devouring its tail), the gold trade, the okapi (a distant relative of the giraffe from the northeastern Congo), steamboat technology, North American canoe design, and more. Through March 24. (Kaplan, 525 W. 21st St. 212-645-7335.)

RUUD VAN EMPEL

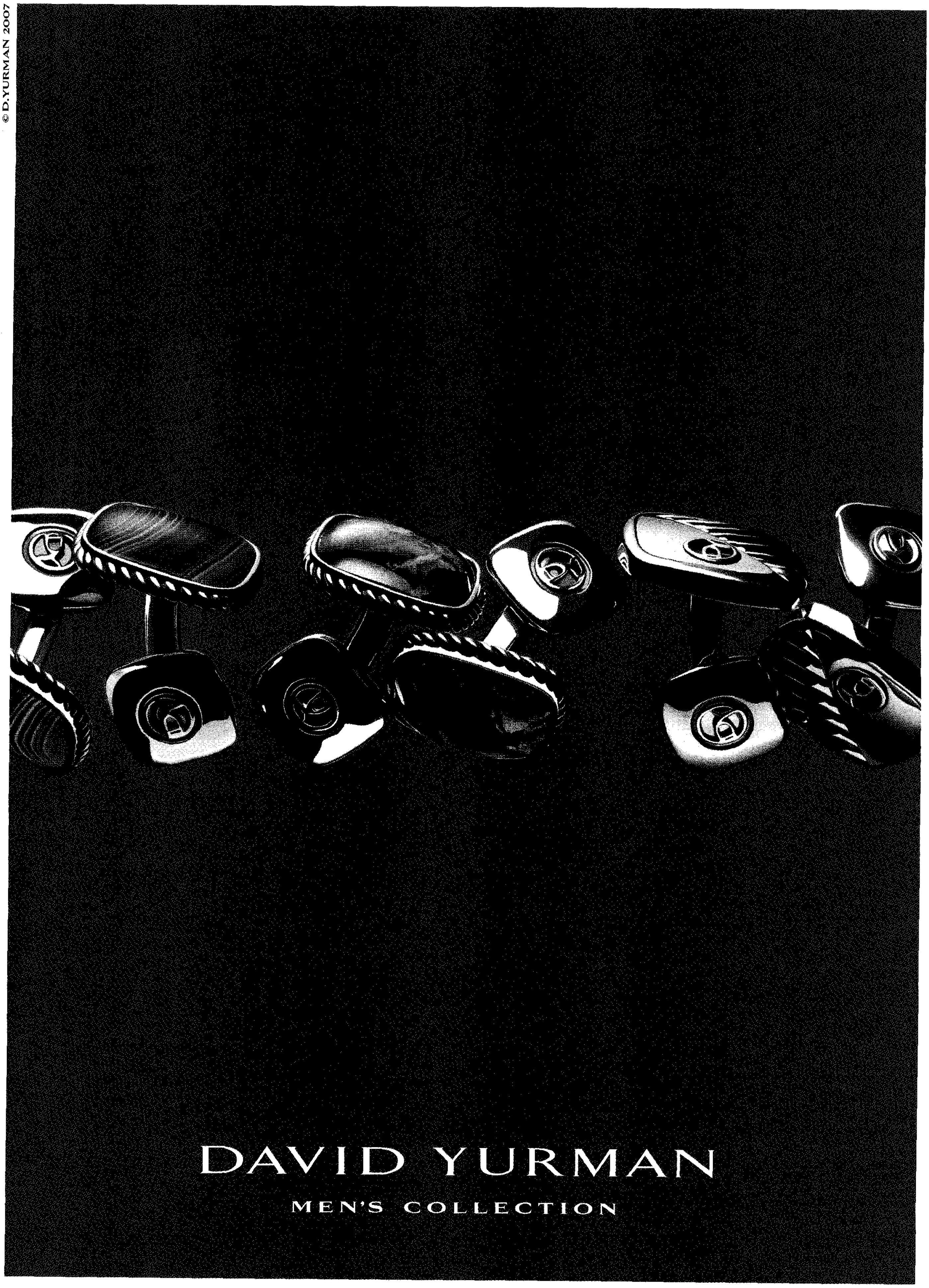
Although all his work is digitally composed from actual photographic elements, the lush jungle settings and beautiful children in van Empel's pictures bear only the slightest resemblance to the real world. The fairy-tale Eden he imagines is so artificial that it looks less like a natural-history diorama than a department-store window display, complete with prim, pretty little mannequins dressed in their Sunday best. Because the subjects of van Empel's new photographs are black (and two of them are portrayed as nude Venus figures in the Cranach mold), there's something more than usually unsettling here. Are they idealized or vampirized? Depends on whether you're charmed or totally creeped out. Through March 17. (Stux, 530 W. 25th St. 212-352-1600.)

HELLEN VAN MEENE

This Dutch photographer's color pictures of children and adolescents are not as peculiar as some she's shown, but they remain wonderfully odd. Working with young people in Latvia, London, Russia, Morocco, Japan, and the Netherlands, van Meene elicits and shapes performances (often contortions of self-consciousness that come easily to girls and boys in their teens), which she then compresses into portraits. The best of these have the radiant intensity of Renaissance miniatures, but their appeal is always complicated by their subjects' strikingly unconventional looks and a sense of dreamy, abstracted inwardness. What are these kids thinking? Wouldn't you like to know. Through March 17. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

Short List

HENRY CLAY ANDERSON: Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through March 30. **ROSA-**



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DAVID YURMAN

MEN'S COLLECTION

NEW YORK BEVERLY HILLS DALLAS MANHASSET ORLANDO SOUTH COAST PLAZA DAVIDYURMAN.COM

LYN DREXLER: PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Opens March 16. **JUSTINE KURLAND:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through April 7. **ANTHONY MCCALL:** Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181. Through March 17. **LORI NIX:** Jenkins Johnson, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-0707. Through April 21.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

JONATHAN HERDER
Herder cuts up old postage stamps (mostly from the nineteen-forties through the seventies) and repurposes their delicate engraved tracings to make collages that consider history and the landscape. For this show, he continues his philatelic experiments and adds a new series of related works: ink drawings of currency and stock certificates. Opens March 16. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

DANCE

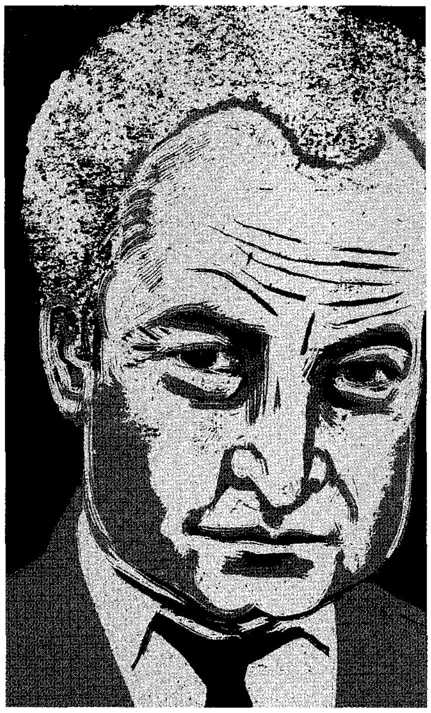
"EDWARD SCISSORHANDS"
Matthew Bourne's hotly anticipated touring spectacle puts the endearing loner of Tim Burton's 1990 cult film at the center of fairy-tale American suburbia, circa 1950. Bourne, a Brit with a populist streak (remember his Tony-winning "Swan Lake"?), gives his audience a lot of pleasure: falling snow, young love, adorable topiary, and potent music (by Terry Davies, incorporating Danny Elfman's themes from the movie). Grand images—not plot—are the work's strength. Nonetheless, Edward (played on alternating nights by Sam Archer and Richard Winsor) becomes a palpable dramatic presence. (Howard Gilman Opera House, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. March 14 at 7, March 15-16 and March 20 at 7:30, March 17 at 2 and 7:30, and March 18 at 1 and 6:30. Through March 31.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
The final days of the company's season offer a few last opportunities to see Taylor classics ("Promethean Fire," "Esplanade," "Polaris"), as well as two new works, "Lines of Loss" and "Troilus and Cressida (reduced)." This generation of Taylor dancers is quick and light, and the choreographer's movement looks especially fluid on them. But they also shine from within, investing a wide range of complex roles with sincere, unflagging feeling. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. March 14-15 at 7, March 16 at 8, March 17 at 2 and 8, and March 18 at 3. For daily programs, see www.nycitycenter.org.)

BUGLISI DANCE THEATRE
In Jacqulyn Buglisi's new "Caravaggio Meets Hopper," guests Robert La Fosse, Martine van Hamel, and veteran Graham dancers Terese Capucilli and Christine Dakin form the older of two cohorts. Their expressive development of character contrasts with the athletic approach of the company's youth brigade as the two groups develop Buglisi's fixation with chairs, newspapers, and masks made of wooden slats. In the season's other première, "Acapelorus (A Walrus Tale)," the dancers galumph and pounce to a live performance of Libby Larsen's commissioned score, while the artist Michael Arthur draws a picture that is projected onto the back wall. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 13-14 at 7:30, March 15-16 at 8, March 17 at 2 and 8, and March 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

ZVI DANCE
Among the many students that Gertrud Kraus (1903-77) inspired during her long reign at the center of Israeli dance was the young Zvi Gotheiner. His contribution to the 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Festival includes a commemorative evocation of his teacher, for which his own memories were buttressed by interviews and selections from Kraus's notebooks. One dancer follows another's improvised instructions; someone recites one of Kraus's dance koans; a Kraus-like wig roams from head to head. Also on the program is Gotheiner's "post-Stonewall" version of Stravinsky's "Les Noces." (Ailey Citigroup Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 212-415-5500. March 14-15 and March 17 at 8 and March 18 at 2 and 7.)

"SNOW WHITE"
Ann Liv Young, the twenty-six-year-old enfant terrible who brought us trailer sex and masturbation in her not-for-the-faint-of-heart dance-theatre piece "Michael" two years ago, takes on one of our most beloved fairy tales. The simple story, with its magical mirror and perfume of hatred and death, becomes an explicit exploration of psychosexual control, in which Snow White, no longer the hyper-feminine victim, calls the shots, even—and especially—in bed. Young uses masks, a good dose of nudity, and a very real sex scene to get her point across. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 14-17 at 8. Through March 24.)



John Banville, who wrote the novel "Christine Falls" under the pseudonym Benjamin Black, reads from it this week.

BEPPE GIACOBBE

LE VU LONG / TOGETHER HIGHER
Apart from Le Vu Long and his wife, Luu Thi Thu Lan, all of the members of this Vietnamese ensemble are either deaf or hearing-impaired. The handicap doesn't seem to affect the dancing—the lithe and compact Thai Tran Linh is a wonder—but in "Stories of Us," it is channelled into a difference-versus-conformity theme. The male-on-male duets and kissing might have been shocking in Hanoi, but here the triviality of the solos is more troubling. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 15-17 at 7:30.)

"THE ENDLESS HOUSE"
This new work by the emerging downtown choreographer Juliana May (the title refers to a design for a biomorphic house by the architect Frederick Kiesler) combines thematic opacity with stylistic coherence, convincingly set in motion by her excellent quartet of female dancers. The diminutive Christine Elmo, in particular, is a powerhouse, almost possessed by May's idiosyncratic and yet compelling and utterly relentless movement vocabulary, which evokes animal-like activity—fluttering amoebas, pacing bulls, fish out of water—as well as repetitive exercise routines and a loss of motor control. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. March 15-17 at 8.)

IRISH MODERN DANCE THEATRE
John Scott's Dublin-based troupe approaches experimental dance-theatre with a welcome sense of humor. In "It Is Better to . . .," by the German choreographer Thomas Lehman, statements ranging from the banal to the ridiculous—all of them opening with the title phrase—become instructions for the dancers ("demonstrate your favorite sexual position," "imitate something dead"). "RrrrKILLKILLKILL," by Brooklyn's Chris Yon, is funnier still, with its absurdly detailed mental exercises for the audience and an "official" monologue conveyed telepathically. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. March 15-16 at 8, March 17 at 4 and 8, and March 18 at 4.)

COMPAÑÍA NACIONAL DE DANZA 2
The Spanish contemporary ballet choreographer Nacho Duato's junior company attracts talented young classical dancers, who are then molded into vessels for Duato's inventive, unpredictable choreography. In "Remansos," one of three repertory works the troupe will perform at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, quirky stylistic shifts break the flow of the languid piano music, while in the folk-inflected "Rassemblement," the dancers sprint and sway to Haitian voodoo songs. (Walt Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. March 17 at 8.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET
The chamber company presents a doubleheader of ballets for children: "Carnival of the Animals" (with music by Saint-Saëns) and Stravinsky's magical "The Firebird." The company's strength in these one-hour presentations is its commitment to beautifully staged, non-pandering introductions to the art form for children, with ravishing costumes (by Sylvia Taalsohn Nolan), elegant stage designs (by Gillian Bradshaw-Smith), and, on this occasion, live music performed on piano four-hands. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. March 17-18 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Bartlett Sher's new production of **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** which débuted last fall, brings a fresh Broadway sensibility—and some topnotch singing from such artists as Juan Diego Flórez and Peter Mattei—to Rossini's comic masterwork. Joining the cast for the spring run are Joyce DiDonato (an excellent mezzo-soprano, replacing the soprano Diana Damrau), as Rosina, and the ever-welcome John Relyea, as Don Basilio; Maurizio Benini, a reliable interpreter of the French and Italian repertories, conducts. (March 14 at 7:30 and March 17 at 8.) ♦ Without a superstar like the dramatic soprano Deborah Voigt, the Met wouldn't be caught dead staging a piece like **"Die Ägyptische Helena,"** a Strauss-Hofmannsthal rarity from the nineteen-twenties. But she is here, and the show—lavish, though a bit too complex for its own good—will go on in a new production by David Fielding (the first at the house since the 1928 première), with a cast that includes such fine singers as Diana Damrau, Jill Grove, and Torsten Kerl; Fabio Luisi, a fresh new presence on the Met's podium, conducts. (March 15 and March 19 at 8.) ♦ The Franco Zeffirelli production of **"La Traviata,"** which has been floating about the schedule for the past two months, returns with a promising cast that features Krassimira Stoyanova, Jonas Kauffman (who made a strong impression as Alfredo last season), and Dwayne Croft, and a new conductor, Marco Armiliato. (March 16 and March 20 at 8.) ♦ The tenor Ramón Vargas takes the title role of Gounod's **"Faust,"** seen here in Andrei Serban's colorful, if somewhat scattered, production from 2005. Also with Ruth Ann Swenson (Marguerite) and Ildar Abdrazakov (Méphistophélès); Benini. (March

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17 at 1:30. This is the final performance.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
A new production of Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Pirates of Penzance"** features not only the Broadway stars Marc Kudisch (as the Pirate King) and Mark Jacoby but also such skillful house comedians as Myrna Paris and Kevin Burdette, and Sarah Jane McMahon and Matt Morgan as the romantic leads; Gerald Steichen conducts. (March 15 at 6:30, March 16-17 at 8, March 18 at 1:30, and March 20 at 7:30.) ♦ The graceful, appealing Mark Lamos production of **"Madama Butterfly"** returns, with Angela Maria Blasi, Misoon Ghim, Raul Melo, and Grant Youngblood in the leading roles; George Manahan. (March 14 at 7:30 and March 17 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

AMATO OPERA: "LA FORZA DEL DESTINO"
New York's semi-amateur shoebox opera house puts on a Lilliputian production of Verdi's most unwieldy opera, with all the charm and gusto of an Italian hill-town troupe. Anthony Amato, as always, directs. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. March 17 at 7:30 and March 18 at 2:30. Through April 1.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Alan Gilbert, a keenly intelligent conductor with a clear, magisterial beat, has an outside chance of becoming the Philharmonic's next music director. He continues his rolling audition with a program featuring Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (via Stokowski's orchestration), Schumann's "Rhenish" Symphony, and György Ligeti's Violin Concerto, a late masterpiece with folkish overtones. The brainy German virtuoso Christian Tetzlaff is the soloist. (March 15 at 7:30, March 16 at 2, and March 17 at 8.) ♦ The night before the run, Steven Stucky anatomizes Ligeti's score with Gilbert and Tetzlaff, as part of the Philharmonic's hearteningly popular "Hear & Now" series. (March 14 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM: "LEIPZIG 1723"
Gotham is a tough town for early music. This admired group, under the direction of the estimable Andrew Parrott, will be going on hiatus for a while, so aficionados will want to catch this concert, a celebration of Bach's arrival in the city in which he would do his greatest work. The singers Emily Van Evera and Curtis Streetman are featured in performances of Cantatas Nos. 22-23 (Bach's audition pieces for the job of cantor of St. Thomas Church) and No. 75. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, Lexington Ave. at 66th St. 212-717-9246. March 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
Garrick Ohlsson, fresh from a run of Beethoven concerts at Lincoln Center, continues his bent with a performance of the Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor") in a concert with the conductor Hans Graf, who makes his first appearance with the ensemble. The program begins with Strauss (the Introduction to "Capriccio") and ends with Mozart (the Symphony No. 40 in G Minor). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRE PHILHARMONIQUE DE RADIO FRANCE
The Korean conductor Myung-Whun Chung is a master of orchestral color: his recordings of Ravel and Messiaen are second to none in surface beauty. In an appearance with the Philharmonique, which he has led since 2000, Chung plays to his strengths, leading Ravel's childlike "Mother Goose," the same composer's dark and grownup Concerto for the Left Hand (with Vladimir Feltsman), and Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 18 at 2.)

RUSSIAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
This hardy, independent orchestra, led by the protean Mikhail Pletnev, plays with that zealous sense of commitment that has always characterized the best Russian ensembles. Their last concert at Avery Fisher Hall features Tchaikovsky's tumultuous tone poem "Francesca da Rimini," Rachmaninoff's "Paganini Rhapsody" (with Niko-

lai Lugansky), and Glazunov's Symphony No. 6, a rarity in the West. (212-721-6500. March 18 at 3.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "ISLAND JOURNEYS"
The mezzo-soprano Rinat Shaham and the cellist Edward Arron are special guests on Steven Blier and Michael Barrett's latest concert, a program of music (by Ravel, Britten, John Corigliano, and Jerome Kern, among others) celebrating such magical places as Ireland, Manhattan, and Madagascar. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 14-15 at 8.)

SARI GRUBER
Gruber, the winner of the Naumburg Foundation's vocal award for 2005, is not the only star in this concert—the other is George Tsontakis, the recent winner of the coveted three-year Charles Ives Living fellowship. The world première of his song cycle "Midnight Rain" is the highlight of the soprano's Alice Tully Hall recital, which will also feature songs by Schubert, Falla, and Ravel. (212-721-6500. March 15 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Three prominent pianists offer their only New York recitals of the season. March 15 at 8: Jonathan Biss, a young star with an impeccable pedigree (Barber wrote the Cello Concerto for his grandmother), offers works by Mozart, Webern, Beethoven (the "Pathétique" Sonata), and Schumann ("Kreisleriana"). ♦ March 16 at 8: Ivan Moravec, the eminent interpreter of Debussy, Mozart, and Chopin, brings his best to the Met, playing pieces by all three composers along with a selection of Debussy's "Images." ♦ March 18 at 2:30: The Met concludes its Accolades series, highlighting young musicians of exceptional promise, with a performance from the Israeli-born Inon Barnatan, who offers Schubert's Four Impromptus, D. 935; the world première of a work by Avner Dorman; and Ravel's scintillating "Gaspard de la Nuit." (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

BARGEMUSIC
March 15 at 8: In the first of two concerts, the noted cellist Nathaniel Rosen and the pianist Doris Stevenson begin an exploration of Beethoven's complete music for their combined instruments with the Sonatas for Cello and Piano in F Major, A Major, and C Major. ♦ March 16 at 8: The second program features the Sonatas in G Minor and D Major, along with the Variations on a Theme from Handel's "Judas Maccabaeus." ♦ March 17 at 8: Finnish music—by Sibelius, Saariaho, and Rautavaara—takes pride of place (along with Schumann's "Carnaval") in a solo recital by the pianist Laura Mikkola. ♦ March 18 at 4: Two reliable chamber-music hands, the clarinettist Alan R. Kay and the bassoonist Frank Morelli, join the pianist Jonathan Feldman for a varied program of works by Mendelssohn, Weber, Glinka (the "Trio Pathétique"), Schumann, and Verdi. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

PRAŽÁK QUARTET
The venerable Czech ensemble comes to Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall to offer Erwin Schulhoff's insouciant Five Pieces for String Quartet, along with magisterial quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 76, No. 5) and Dvořák (No. 14 in A-Flat Major). (212-247-7800. March 16 at 7:30.)

"IN YOUR EAR REDUX"
Zankel Hall is the scene for John Adams's annual series of concerts by exciting young performers who explore the boundaries between classical, world music, and pop. March 16 at 7:30: The prodigious composer-keyboardist Nico Muhly teams up with the Vox Vocal Ensemble and an assemblage of instrumentalists for a concert that juxtaposes his chamber pieces with works by Byrd and Tallis. ♦ March 17 at 8:30: Chris Thile—mandolin virtuoso, songwriting genius, and one-third of Nickel Creek—goes way beyond bluegrass with the première of a forty-minute work designed for his new string band, the Tensions

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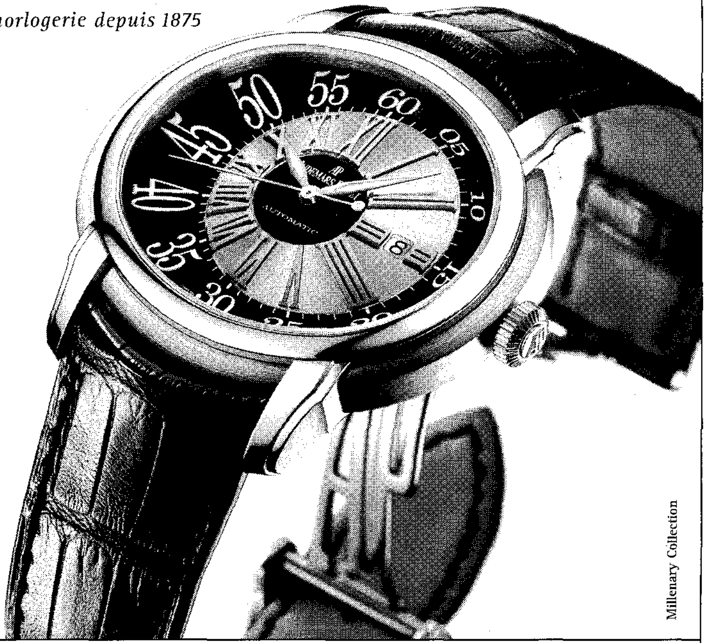

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Mountain Boys. ♦ March 18 at 3: Alan Pierson conducts Alarm Will Sound in a marathon concert of music by Adams, John Orfe, and Stefan Freund, along with arrangements of electronica pieces by Aphex Twin. (212-247-7800.)

DAVID DEL TREDICI'S SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY
The Brooklyn-Queens Conservatory hosts the first in what will be a series of events celebrating the music of the impish American composer-pianist, whose outré orchestral works based on "Alice in Wonderland" kick-started the New Romantic movement in the nineteen-seventies. He will be joined by the pianist Marc Peloquin and others for a concert of recent pieces (including "Dracula"). (Seventh Ave. at Lincoln Pl., Brooklyn. 718-622-3300. March 17 at 8.)

MATA FESTIVAL
The annual festival, executive-produced by Philip Glass, leaves Manhattan for a series of events that bring nineteen talented young international composers, of wildly diverse musical backgrounds, together with two bright young ensembles, Amsterdam's avant-garde quintet Hexnut and the Knights, a more traditional chamber orchestra from Brooklyn. (Brooklyn Lyceum, Fourth Ave. at President St. March 18-24. For full listings, see www.matafestival.org.)

MOVIES OPENING

ADAM'S APPLES
A drama from Denmark about a neo-Nazi sentenced to community service in a small town. Directed by Anders Thomas Jensen. In Danish. Opening March 16. (Chelsea Cinemas.)

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER
Irina Gedrovich directed this documentary reconstruction of a German soldier's experiences on the Eastern Front in the Second World War. Opening March 14. (Film Forum.)

AMERICAN CANNIBAL
A documentary, directed by Perry Grebin and Michael Nigro, about the failed reality-TV show. Opening March 16. (Cinema Village.)

BLOCKADE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening March 14. (Film Forum.)

DEAD SILENCE
A horror movie, directed by James Wan, about a killer ventriloquist. Opening March 16. (In wide release.)

I THINK I LOVE MY WIFE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening March 16. (In wide release.)

NOMAD: THE WARRIOR
An adventure film set in eighteenth-century Kazakhstan, about a young man who unites the country's warring factions. Starring Jason Scott Lee and Kuno Becker; directed by Sergei Bodrov and Talgat Temenov. In Kazakh. Opening March 9. (Empire 25 and Village Theatre VII.)

PREMONITION
A thriller, directed by Mennan Yapo, about a woman who sees events before they happen. Starring Sandra Bullock, Julian McMahon, Nia Long, and Amber Valletta. Opening March 16. (In wide release.)

THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 16. (IFC Center.)

NOW PLAYING

ABC AFRICA
This deceptively simple documentary by the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, from 2001, begins with a document—the director's faxed invitation to make a film about a United Nations program to help AIDS orphans in Uganda. The result is, in effect, a visual journal, with Kiarostami himself and his associate toting cameras and filming each other at work on location, as if to filter the report through an understanding of who he is and where he comes from. While deeply moved by the plight of the children, whom he patiently films with an avuncular tenderness, he focusses on AIDS as a sexually transmitted disease, suggesting, in effect, that its victims made love at the risk of death, a phenomenon not unknown, for political reasons, in his home country. A great deal of attention is paid to billboards advertising condoms, the use of which, as a local official explains, the Catholic Church combats—another case of religious authority exerted in unwise opposition to nature. Yet in Kiarostami's canny view the political and the personal have an unintended aesthetic correlate: a wondrous, frightening sequence of a thunderstorm in darkest night is the result of government-planned power outages. In English and Farsi.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; March 17.)

DVD NOTES
THE OLD BALLGAME

Though the silent films in **"Reel Baseball"** (Kino), a two-disk set of features and shorts made from 1899 to 1926, are of minor artistic value, they offer fascinating glimpses of the state of the game—and of the union—in that era.

The set is filled with such peculiarities as a sanitized revision of Babe Ruth's life, "Headin' Home," from 1920, starring the slugger himself in his first season with the Yankees; the nuanced pastoral drama "The Busher," from 1919, about a curveball-throwing farm boy who gets his chance in the big leagues and forgets the girl back home; and the 1914 "Hearts and Diamonds," starring the Falstaffian John Bunny, one of the biggest film-comedy stars before Charlie Chaplin, in the ludicrous tale of a widower who gets up an amateur team to win the heart of a baseball-crazed dowager. These films show how the game was played when the mitts were small and light enough to dangle from belt loops and the men and boys in the stands wore dark suits and ties.

Judging from the works in the box, the 1919 Black Sox scandal was the tip of the iceberg: story after story turns on gamblers' efforts to persuade players to throw games. The cruellest of these tales is the crude 1909 baseball Western "His Last Game," the story of a Choctaw star who, on the day of a big local game, kills a gambler in self-defense, is allowed to play the game, and then is executed unjustly.

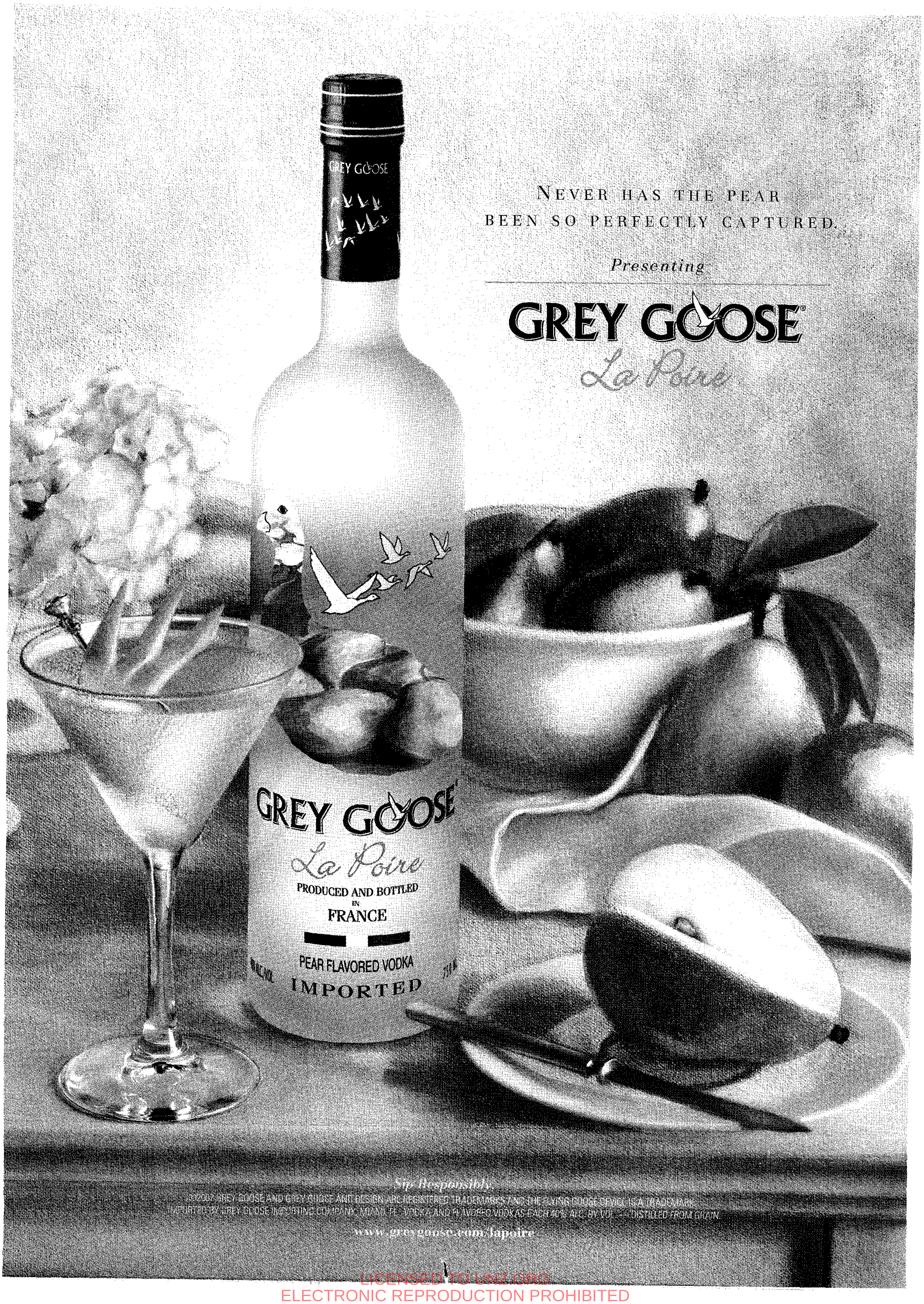
But perhaps most striking is the way the game is shown. These films offer angles on the action unlike any in the standardized routine of television. Such revealing perspectives as a view of home plate that joins pitcher, batter, catcher, and umpire in a mercurial chain of reactions or a view of a runner on third base as if from over the shortstop's head are close in spirit both to the analytical wonders of modern coaching and the energized dreaming that made us love the game—and movies—in the first place. Yet the set's most visionary work is a cartoon: Pat Sullivan's 1922 "Felix Saves the Day," an innovative and fanciful blend of animation, still photography, and live action that takes Felix the Cat from stickball stardom to the Polo Grounds.

—*Richard Brody*

AMAZING GRACE
Square, but stirring. William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd), upon entering Parliament in 1780 at the age of twenty-one, resolved, with the aid of his friend William Pitt (Benedict Cumberbatch), soon to be Prime Minister, at the age of twenty-four, to end the slave trade in the British Empire. Michael Apted's historical epic, from a screenplay by Steven Knight, starts in 1797, when Wilberforce, suffering from colitis and getting much rained on (every time he goes out, he's doused), is at a low ebb. He is saved by the attentions of Barbara Spooner (Romola Garai), a Gainsborough beauty with a luxurious pile of red hair and an exposed pale bosom. As the picture goes backward in time and then forward again, there are eloquent debates, much moral and physical anguish from Wilberforce, and a spirit of Christian resolve, attended, fortunately, by wit. Gruffudd has a serious brow, a wide smile, and romantically disordered locks, and, in the parliamentary scenes, he plants his feet and lets his voice ring out. With Albert Finney as the anguished ex-slave-ship captain John Newton, who wrote the words to the hymn "Amazing Grace," Michael Gambon as the influential Whig politician Charles James Fox, the singer Youssou N'Dour as the ex-slave Ouladaqh Equiano, and, as the radical agitator Thomas Clarkson, the supercilious Rufus Sewell, who might have trouble stifling a smirk while reciting the Seven Last Words of Christ.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/5/07.) (In wide release.)

BEYOND THE GATES
In the spring of 1994, in Kigali, Rwanda, three Westerners—a wily Catholic priest and schoolmaster (John Hurt), his sincere young disciple (Hugh Dancy), and a Belgian military man (Dominique Horwitz) who heads a U.N. unit—hunker down in a besieged school with about twenty-five hundred Tutsis under their protection. Outside the gates, a band of murderous Hutu thugs with machetes wait for the U.N. to leave so they can slaughter all the Tutsis in the school. Michael Caton-Jones's film, from a screenplay by David Wolstencroft, is meant to be a paradigm of the West's hapless betrayal of Rwanda, and much of it is heart-wrenching. The U.N. Security Council, at the behest of Western powers, refuses to intervene (or even to define the slaughter as "genocide"), and the priest can do little but give the children communion and celebrate the pity of a powerless God. Shot in Rwanda, the film doesn't turn away from explicit reënactment of the slaughter. This is perhaps the most honest—and the guiltiest—of the recent Western films about African troubles.—*D.D.* (IFC Center.)

BLACK SNAKE MOAN
An intermittently engrossing but sanctimonious mess. Lazarus (Samuel L. Jackson), a small-time farmer and erstwhile bluesman, lives alone with the burning anger that has consumed him since his wife left him for his brother. Rae (Christina Ricci), an abused nymphomaniac prone to fits and flashbacks, loves the troubled Ronnie (Justin Timberlake), who has just shipped out for the Army, but she can't stay faithful to him for even a few hours. Finding her drugged, drunk, and bloodied on a back road near his farm, Lazarus takes her in and nurtures her with tough love, in a process of chaste mutual redemption that is as contrived and sentimental as it sounds. The writer-director, Craig Brewer, lovingly depicts the heartiness of country ways, but he is after something bigger than reality, and his quasi-mythological churnings boil down to this: messed-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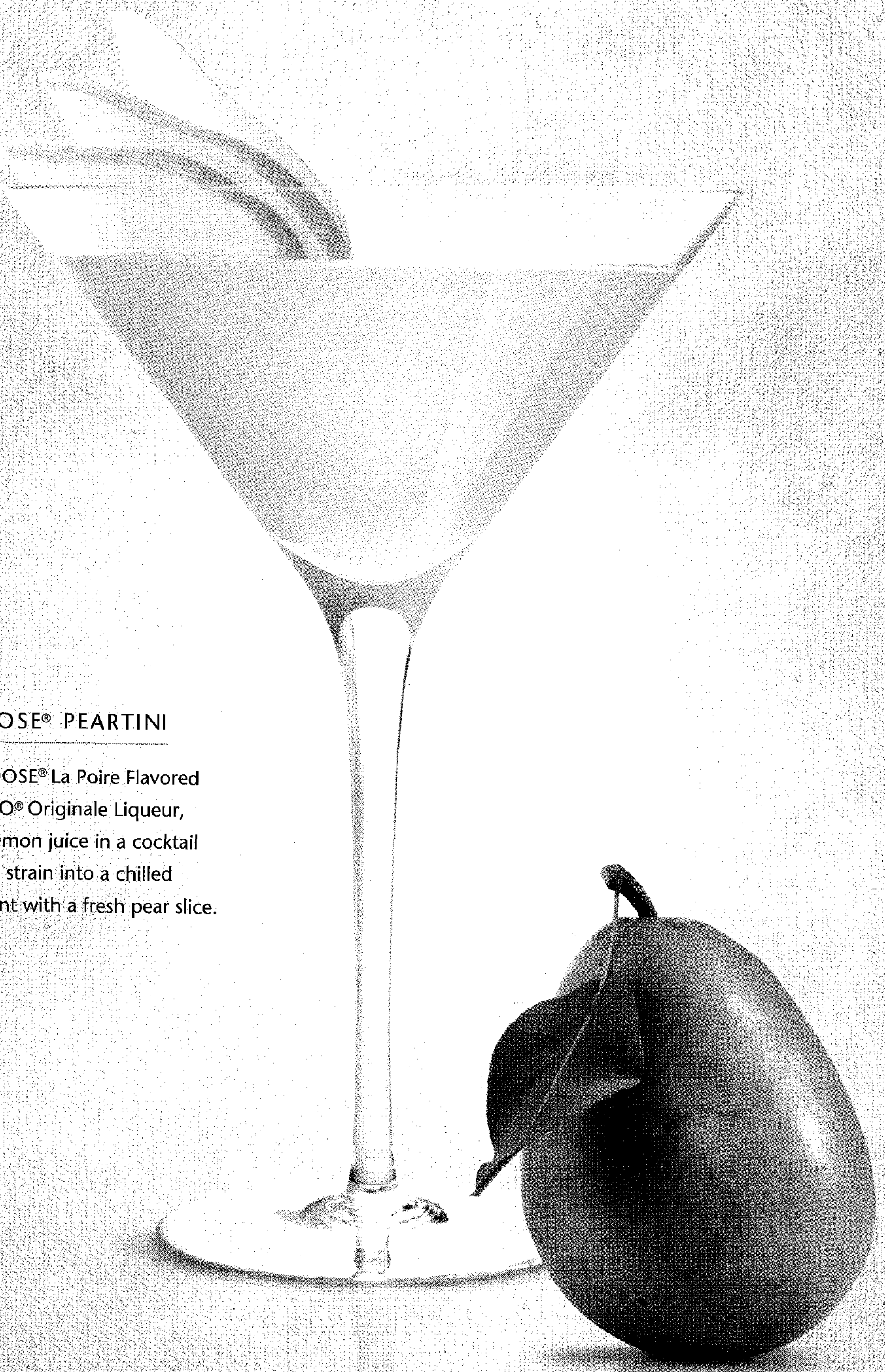

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up white people depend on pious, soulful black folk to make them whole again. His inversion of long-discredited stereotypes smacks unintentionally of nostalgia for faithful servants. Despite the appealing locations, tangy dialogue, and intense, sincere performances (John Cothran is robust as R.L., a backwoods minister), this heady rural stew of violence, race, lust, and religion strains after Faulknerian depth but is mostly Southern-fried hooey.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

BLOCKADE
This compilation of deeply affecting archival footage from the siege of Leningrad, collected and assembled by Sergei Loznitsa, leaves a strange aftertaste. The scenes are ordered chronologically, from the mobilization of civil defense (including the manning of anti-aircraft cannons and the transport of dirigibles through the streets), the devastation of bombing raids, the hardships of the survivors, and the burial of the dead to the hard-won victory and the cold revenge. Loznitsa's odd decision to fabricate a realistic but obviously unreal soundtrack has the unintended effect of making the documentary images seem like skillful reconstructions as well. Even more peculiar, the selection of material has an abstracted feel, as if the events occurred through the indifferent agency of nature, beyond human will and political authority—and, as a result, out of the range of moral judgment.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

THE BLUE KITE
A refined, strong-minded political drama, all the more telling for being so quiet. The director, Tian Zhuangzhuang, is just the kind of casual satirist that the Chinese authorities could do without; the movie met fierce official resistance during postproduction, and Tian has now been banned from further filming. Here, he smiles at a country awash with banners and slogans, and makes you realize that opposition comes not from more of the same but from the bemused responses of provincial people too busy with their own lives to be led astray. The story begins, in 1953, with the death of Stalin, and lasts until 1967; in that time, a young boy named Tietou grows up and goes through three fathers, each of them laid low by persecution. Tietou may be a pain to his long-suffering mother, but his misbehavior is just the first stirring of a rebellious spirit. The movie seems clean and steady, a corrective to the lushness and extravagance that, for better or worse, has come to be seen as the house style of Chinese cinema. In Mandarin.—*Anthony Lane* (Walter Reade Theatre; March 14-15 and March 17-18.)

BREACH
A sombre real-life thriller about an incomprehensible man—Robert Hanssen (a leathery Chris Cooper), who spied for the Soviet Union and Russia for more than two decades while productively employed as a counter-intelligence agent for the F.B.I. Hanssen loved this country, didn't spy for money, went to church all the time, and also made films, for a male friend, of himself and his wife making love. The movie is devoted to the young and ambitious F.B.I. employee Eric O'Neill (Ryan Phillippe), who helped trap Hanssen (he was arrested in February, 2001). Most thrillers are hyped up; this one is grayed out. Tak Fujimoto shot it in subdued light, mostly in dour institutional corridors. The unexciting look and feel of the movie would be acceptable if the filmmakers had penetrated Hanssen's skull a little, but they didn't. Written by Adam Mazer, William Rotko, and Billy Ray, and directed by Ray. The picture was made in consultation with O'Neill.—*D.D.* (2/19 & 26/07) (In wide release.)

BREAKING AND ENTERING
At home, Will Francis (Jude Law), a fashionable young London architect, has a difficult time. Liv (Robin Wright Penn), his girlfriend of ten years, a melancholy, becalmed beauty of mixed Swedish and American background, has a talented, lively autistic daughter—a terrific gymnast who won't eat and can't sleep or calm down. Will's office in North London is repeatedly burglarized after hours. He stakes it out one night and follows the thief, a fifteen-year-old boy, Miro (Rafi Gavron), to an apartment in a council flat, where he discovers Miro's mother, Amira (Juliette Binoche), a Bosnian refugee with a refined face and a full peasant body. He starts an affair with her, going back and forth between the two women. The romantic drama is set against the changing milieu of the King's Cross area, a multicultural gathering ground in which not terribly dangerous thieves and hookers from the Balkans and elsewhere try to find some way of fitting into an alien society. Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, the movie is shrewd and benevolent but rather mild—clemency, not judgment, is in Minghella's heart. Vera Farmiga has a hilarious bit as a huffy Balkan streetwalker wearing very little under her overcoat.—*D.D.* (1/29/07) (In wide release.)

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
Katherine Paterson's children's classic gets an imaginative, emotional telling in director Gabor Csupo's film about a bullied seventh grader (Josh Hutcherson) whose friendship with a young girl (AnnaSophia Robb) leads them to create a made-up, escapist world. The screenwriters, Jeff Stockwell and David Paterson (the author's son), have crafted a wonderful and affecting story, deftly balancing the real-world problems of introverted children and the fantasy lives they create to help them deal with their solitude. The special effects suggest a Narnia-like romp, but the movie has a darker, more sorrowful landscape to explore and it does so brilliantly, with true nuance and heartfelt sincerity.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

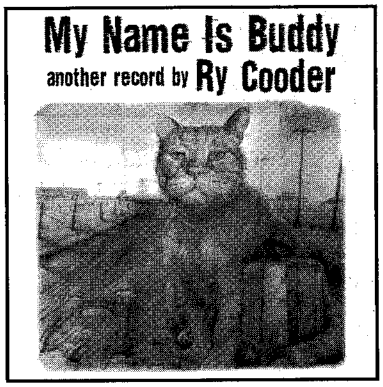
THE CATS OF MIRIKITANI
For her directing début, Linda Hattendorf found a remarkable subject in the laconic Jimmy Mirikitani, an eighty-year-old homeless Japanese-American artist and former detainee at an internment camp in California during the Second World War who was living on the streets of SoHo. When the attacks of 9/11 permeated the air of lower Manhattan with toxic fumes, Hattendorf invited Mirikitani, whom she had been casually filming, to take shelter in her downtown apartment. She documents their growing relationship as she helps him find lost relatives and, in spite of his reluctance, helps him get off the streets. With little more than a simple video camera, Hattendorf builds an acute, riveting portrait of a humble and dignified man whose obsession with the injustices he (and thousands of others) suffered is uneasily mitigated by human connection.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinema Village.)

DAYS OF GLORY
A fascinating French battle epic devoted to an ironic subject—the bravery of Muslim soldiers from French North Africa who fought during the Second World War for "*la patrie*." But what, for these men, was *la patrie*? Colonial Algeria or Morocco? Denied standard leave and promotions, the men at times feel an intense chagrin. They are fighting to liberate France and desperately want recognition from the French, but what is France going to do for them? As in an American platoon film from the forties, there is the young man who needs to prove himself, the soldier who falls in love, the tough sergeant who both bullies and loves the men. Some of the staging is stiff, but there's a dandy little battle at the end, in which the unit of North Africans finds itself defending a village in Alsace-Lorraine against the Wehrmacht. Directed by Rachid Bouchareb. In French and Arabic.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

FACTORY GIRL
Edie Sedgwick, the skinny sixties heiress with enormous eyes and great legs who became a *Vogue* "youthquaker" and Warhol superstar and then, cast off by the great man, died of an overdose at twenty-eight, has inspired a kind of whirling minor bio-pic in which the heroine (Sienna Miller) burns brightly and then snuffs herself out. It's a very strange movie, frantic and

Words on Music

★★★★★
The Observer (UK)



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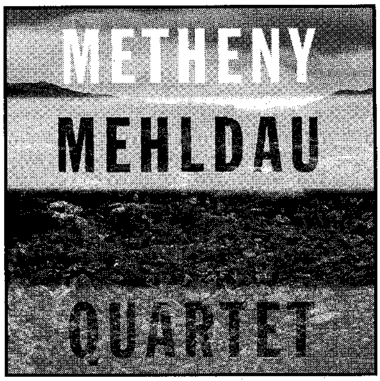

The follow-up to Pat Metheny and Brad Mehldau's 2006 duo album features the guitarist in session with Mehldau's trio, and arrives at the start of their national tour together.

BORDERS®

useless, with a hyperactive camera that gives us no more than fleeting impressions of Edie in Warhol's Factory, Edie ecstatic at parties, Edie strung out on drugs, Edie lying, mostly naked, on a bed, her skin splotchy from injections. Miller laughs, fidgets, and acts up a storm of desperate anxiety, but the inexpressive script (by Aaron Richard Golub and the screenwriter who styles himself Captain Mauzner) doesn't help very much. Guy Pearce, who plays Warhol, has the appropriate interior slump, the ineffable malign vagueness, but the movie has nothing new to say about the Warhol scene and its victims, and we're left with the impression that the movie got made because Edie is still just notorious enough to be exploited one more time. Directed by George Hickenlooper.—*D.D.* (2/19 & 26/07) (In wide release.)

FIG LEAVES

Already in 1926, with his second feature film, Howard Hawks's effervescent blend of sly sex comedy and riotous slapstick is on gleeful display. The title refers to Eve's garments in the Garden of Eden, and the story begins there, with the primordial couple living like the Flintstones, with a pet brontosaurus, before leaping ahead to the Roaring Twenties. Adam Smith (George O'Brien), a strapping young plumber, is married to the willowy Eve (Olive Borden), who lives in modest comfort but yearns for high-fashion finery. Comic accidents bring her to the attention of Josef André, the haute-couture king, at whose Fifth Avenue salon she soon becomes the leading model and object of desire—unbeknownst to her husband. Adam's gender-bending games with his gruff business partner, Eddie (Heinie Conklin), and the viperish wiles of the flapper next door (Phyllis Haver) add ribald laughs, and a loopy, outlandish fashion show (originally shot as a color insert but surviving only in black-and-white) suggests the enticing plumage of exotic birds. Though the film is silent, Hawks's epigrammatic rapidity is already in evidence—the characters talk non-stop with such lively, pointed grace that a viewer might swear he hears the intertitles spoken before seeing them onscreen.—*R.B.* (Moving Image; March 18.)

THE HOST

Something is hiding in the River Han, in the middle of Seoul. As a result of industrial pollution, a small tadpole has grown not into a respectable frog but into a bad-tempered tadpole the size of a bus. Soon it starts leaving the waters, snatching ordinary Koreans from the banks and carrying them off to its fetid home in the sewers. When a young girl is taken, her father, the hitherto hopeless Gang-du (Song Kang-ho), enlists the aid of his family and sets off to save her. Bong Joon-ho's monster movie is often funny and occasionally disgusting, but rarely does it strike you as ridiculous. By the end (which is only just happy), you feel threatened and drained, as you should after a grownup fairy tale, and there are moments of surprising grace—watch an apparition of the girl sneak into the midst of a communal meal. On the other hand, don't go looking for mercy from the beast; this thing would treat King Kong as a typical bleeding-heart mammal. In Korean.—*A.L.* (3/12/07) (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

I THINK I LOVE MY WIFE

A missed opportunity. For his second directorial effort, Chris Rock (working with co-writer Louis C.K.) closely adapts Eric Rohmer's 1972 "Chloe in the Afternoon," about a happily married businessman with a wandering eye whose fantasy life is put to the test by an intense platonic relationship with a temptress who reappears from his past. Rock, who also stars, can't decide whether to aim for realism or comedy, and the result is neither credible nor funny. Filming on location in New York, Rock places his character, Richard Cooper, in an investment bank in a midtown tower where they ought to review their security arrangements: sleek, sexy Nikki Tru (Kerry Washington) keeps turning up in his office uninvited and unannounced. As a director, Rock doesn't reimagine Rohmer's story but merely borrows it; as an actor, he keeps slipping back into an overeager yelping that takes a viewer back to his small-screen persona. His actors, including Gina Torres as his wife, Steve Buscemi as his colleague, and Edward Herrmann as his boss, fulfill their stereotypical roles one-dimensionally. The best thing in the film is the comic riffing on a serious subject, the social identity of America's black middle class, but it is too diluted by sketch comedy to take hold.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

"Fashion in Film," at Moving Image.

THE LIVES OF OTHERS

This first feature from the young German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck starts in 1984, in East Berlin. A successful playwright (Sebastian Koch) and his girlfriend (Martina Gedeck), hitherto trusted by the state, are placed under Stasi surveillance. Their investigator, a lonely ascetic by the name of Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), is told to entrap them, instead of which, little by little, he lets them off the hook. Given the movie's cross-weave of envy, terror, paranoia, and endangered principle, Donnersmarck might have been expected to tie himself in knots; yet the outcome, after two and a half hours, remains taut and clear, and by the end you feel exhausted and oddly uplifted. What was the last new movie that put you through so much yet convinced you that the ordeal was worthwhile? With Ulrich Tukur as Wiesler's cheerfully vicious boss. In German.—*A.L.* (2/12/07) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MUSIC AND LYRICS

In this lightweight comedy written and directed by Marc Lawrence, Hugh Grant plays a former member of a New Wave act with a chance at a musical comeback and Drew Barrymore plays his plant caretaker, who just happens to have a gift for lyrics. The movie is boilerplate listless in its romantic twists and turns, and both Barrymore and Grant seem to be following diagrams of their past performances in similar roles. Still, the movie is amiable enough to be entertaining, and some of the supporting performances, especially from Kristen Johnston as Barrymore's idol-smitten sister, are terrific. The music, by Adam Schlesinger, of Fountains of Wayne, who crafted perfect pop tunes for "That Thing You Do," is too intentionally joke-ridden and misses the magic this songwriting partnership sorely needs.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

NORBIT

Eddie Murphy mocks every stereotype in the book and invents a few of his own in this raucous, vulgar comic extravaganza. In the three lead roles—the mild-mannered title character; Rasputia, the blustering, obese harridan he marries; and Mr. Wong, the owner of the Chinese restaurant-cum-orphanage where he was raised—Murphy cuts loose with a panoply of antic impressions unmatched since the heyday of Jerry Lewis. As Norbit, Murphy channels the meek persona at the center of many Lewis classics, down to the accent, but he centers the film around Rasputia, a scintillating, uproarious villain. Despite the innumerable gags about her physique, this is, above all, a comedy of spousal abuse, and it's Rasputia's oppressive, disturbing conduct that is deplorable, not her attributes. Whatever personal demons Murphy is exorcising by camping it up in drag while wearing a fat suit, he is clearly saying nothing about fat people in general but a great deal about himself. Unfortunately, the director, Brian Robbins, doesn't do much more than stage-manage the riotous proceedings. Though less than the sum of its parts, the movie is, even when not quite funny, nothing less than virtuosic—and if there's any justice in pop culture, it should coin a new catchphrase, "How *you* doin'?," Rasputia's exuberant reduction of "How do you like *them* apples?"—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

PARIS IS BURNING

Arriving in theatres in 1991, a year and a half after Madonna roused public curiosity about voguing, Jennie Livingston's documentary about New York City drag balls caused a small sensation by offering a swift view of the witty and unsettling ways in which gay black and Hispanic men—the creators of the scene—transform and mimic figures out of straight white civilization. It works best as a quick-cutting performance film with a rapid, flexible style that mirrors the performers' strutting on runways and dance floors. Otherwise, it remains a series of open questions about gender, social programming (is this a victory over straight white society or a capitulation before it?), and, especially, the need for post-nuclear families. The participants in the balls form "Houses"—simultaneously domestic households, fashion coteries, and gangs. But when a House Mother talks about how well she takes care of her "children," it's not enough to glimpse a grown "child" lounging in the background and nodding his head. Viewers may want to know more about what he's assenting to.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; March 18.)

RENO 911!: MIAMI

Frickin' hilarious. Familiarity with the Comedy Central show that spawned this glorious waste of celluloid is not essential. Created and shot as a handheld spoof of "Cops," the movie gathers up the sometimes swaggering, sometimes trembling, always inept members of the Reno Sheriff's Department and deposits them at a police convention in Miami for a ridiculous adventure flavored with a lot of drinking and intramural sex. The eight-person comedy troupe brings a brilliant improvisatory style to the big

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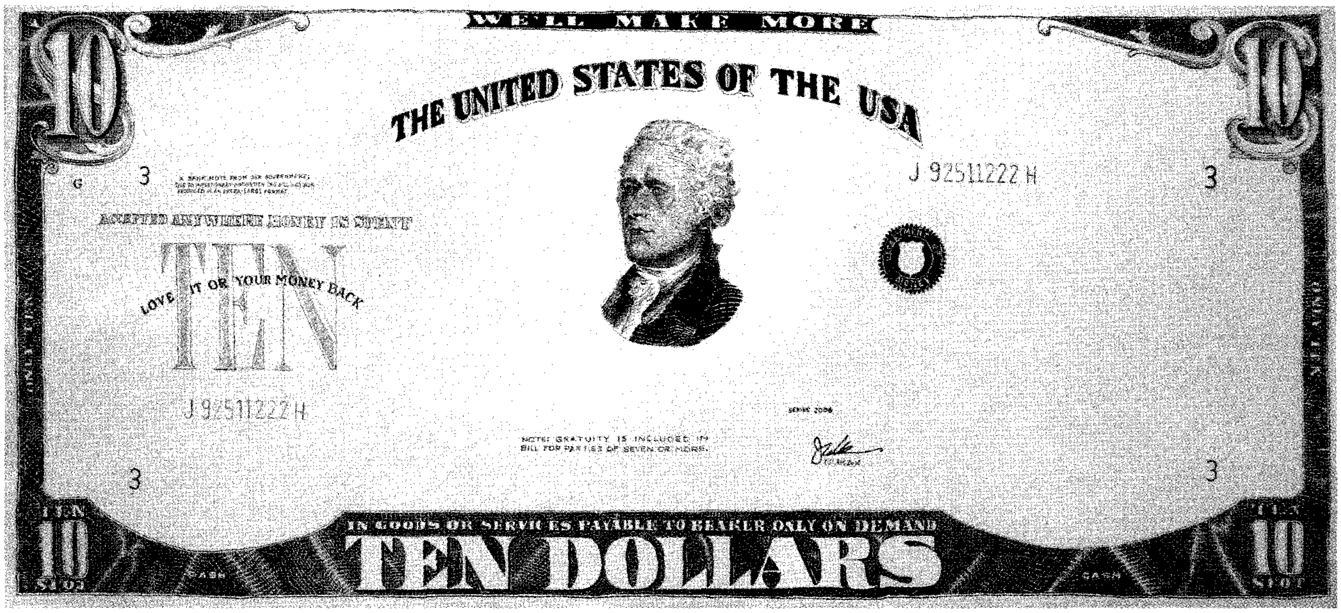
screen. They're comfortable enough to be utterly shameless: clothing, taboos, and propriety fly away in the Florida breeze. Laughs this big don't come along often. Written by troupe members Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon, and Kerri Kenney, and directed by Garant.—*Ken Marks* (In wide release.)

STARTER FOR 10

Forest Whitaker may have received the performance accolades for "The Last King of Scotland," but his co-star, James McAvoy, was with him every step of the way. In his new film, set in the nineteen-eighties, McAvoy plays a working-class student at Bristol University who's given the opportunity to compete in a popular U.K. quiz show. This British import, a light coming-of-age drama about fitting in and, of course, choosing the right girl for a college romance (Alice Eve is the sharp blonde and Rebecca Hall is the socialist brunette) is a familiar stew, but McAvoy spices it up with the nervous energy of a young Dustin Hoffman ("The Graduate" is referenced in the film). His performance rescues the sputtering screenplay (by David Nicholls, based on his novel) whenever it loses momentum. Directed, less than briskly, by Tom Vaughan.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)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A show of Jonathan Herder's recent work (including the ink-on-paper "Ten Dollar Bill," above) opens at Pierogi this week.

ZODIAC

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

Also Playing

THE ASTRONAUT FARMER: In wide release. **DADDY'S LITTLE GIRLS:** In wide release. **GHOST RIDER:** In wide release. **THE NAMESAKE:** Angelika Film Center and Paris. **THE NUMBER 23:** In wide release. **300:** In wide release. **WILD HOGS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." March 14 at 8: "The Pacific and Eddy" (2006, Matthew Nourse). ♦ "The Sights and Sounds of Harry Smith." March 14-16 and March 19-20 at 7:30 and March 17-18 at 5:30 and 7:30: "No. 12: Heaven and Earth Magic" (1957-62). The March 14 screening will be accompanied by a live slide show. ♦ March 15-17 at 8 and March 18 at 5: "The Old, Weird America: Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music" (2006, Rani Singh). ♦ March 17-18 at 3:30: Short films by Smith, including "Oz, the Tin Woodman's Dream" (1967). ♦ March 17 at 5 and March 18 at 7: "Film #18: Mahagonny" (1970-80).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Pimps, Prostitutes and Pigs," the films of Shohei Imamura. All films are in Japanese. March 14 at 6 and 9: "A Man Vanishes" (1967). ♦ March 15 at 7:30: "History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess" (1970). ♦ March 16 at 3 and 7: "Profound Desire of the Gods" (1968). ♦ March 17 at 3, 6, and 9: "The Pornographers" (1966). ♦ March 18 at 3, 6, and 9: "Intentions of Murder" (1964). ♦ March 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Endless Desire" (1958).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. March 14-15 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Raise the Red Lantern" (1991, Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). ♦ March 16-29 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Earrings of Madame De . . ." (1953, Max Ophuls; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through March 27: "French Seventies: Cinema After May '68." All films are in French. March 19 at 12:30 and 6:30: "Themroc" (1973, Claude Faraldo). ♦ March 19 at 4 and 9: "Passe-Montagne" (1978, Jean-François Stévenin) and "Octopus de Natura" (1972, Marie-Christine Questerbert).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. March 15 at 7:30: "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" (1986, John Hughes), followed by a panel discussion led by the writer Jaime Clarke. ♦ March 16-18 at noon: "The Organizer" (1963, Mario Monicelli; in Italian). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." March 16-17: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Canadian Front 2007." March 14 at 4:30 and March 17 at 6:30: "Remembering Arthur" (2006, Martin Lavut). ♦ March 14 at 6:15 and March 17 at 4:15: "Away from Her" (2006, Sarah Polley). ♦ March 14 at 8:30 and March 18 at 1:30: "Maurice Richard (the Rocket)" (2005, Charles Binamé; in French). ♦ March 15 at 6:30 and March 19 at 8:30: "Stone, Time, Touch" (2006, Garine Torossian; in English and Armenian). ♦ March 15 at 8:30 and March 19 at 6: "Immigrant" (2006, Bojan Bodruzic; in English and Bosnian). ♦ March 16 at 6 and March 17 at 2: "Radiant City" (2006, Gary Burns and Jim Brown). ♦ March 16 at 8:30 and March 18 at 6:30: "In the Cities" (2006, Catherine Martin; in French). ♦ March 17 at 8:30 and March 18 at 4: "Looking for Victor Pellerin" (2006, Sophie Deraspe; in French). ♦ The films of Abbas Kiarostami. Except where noted, all films are in Farsi. March 14 at 6:15: "First-Graders" (1984). ♦ March 14 at 8: "Homework" (1989). ♦ March 15 at 6: "Where Is the Friend's House?" (1987). ♦ March 15 at 8: "And Life Goes On . . ." (1991). ♦ March 16 at 6: "The Wind Will Carry Us" (1999; in Farsi and Kurdish). ♦ March 16 at 8:30: "Close-Up" (1990). ♦ March 17 at 2: "Taste of Cherry" (1997) and "Birth of Light" (1997). ♦ March 17 at 4: "ABC Africa" (†). ♦ March 17 at 6: "Ten" (2002) and "Dinner for One" (1995; in French). ♦ March 18 at 2: "Five" (2004). ♦ March 19 at 6: "10 on Ten" (2004). ♦ March 19 at 8: Short films, including "Rug" (2006).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Fashion in Film." March 17 at 2: "The Enigma of Clothing," an illustrated talk by the curator Marketa Uhlirova and a short-film screening, including "In a Hurry to Catch a Train" (1901, Ferdinand Zecca; silent). ♦ March 17 at 4: "Rear Window" (1954, Alfred Hitchcock), with a lecture by the writer Pat Kirkham. ♦ March 17 at 6:30: "Liquid Sky" (1982, Slava Tsukerman), introduced by the director, the cinematographer, Yuri Neyman, and the costume designer, Marina Levikova. ♦ March 18 at 2: "Fig Leaves" (†), introduced by the writer Drake Stutesman. ♦ March 18 at 4: "Shoes, Eroticism, and Fetish," a talk by the curator Christel Tsilibaris and a screening of "Diary of a Chambermaid" (1964, Luis Buñuel; in French) and short films. ♦ March 18 at 6:30: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

PIONEER THEATRE

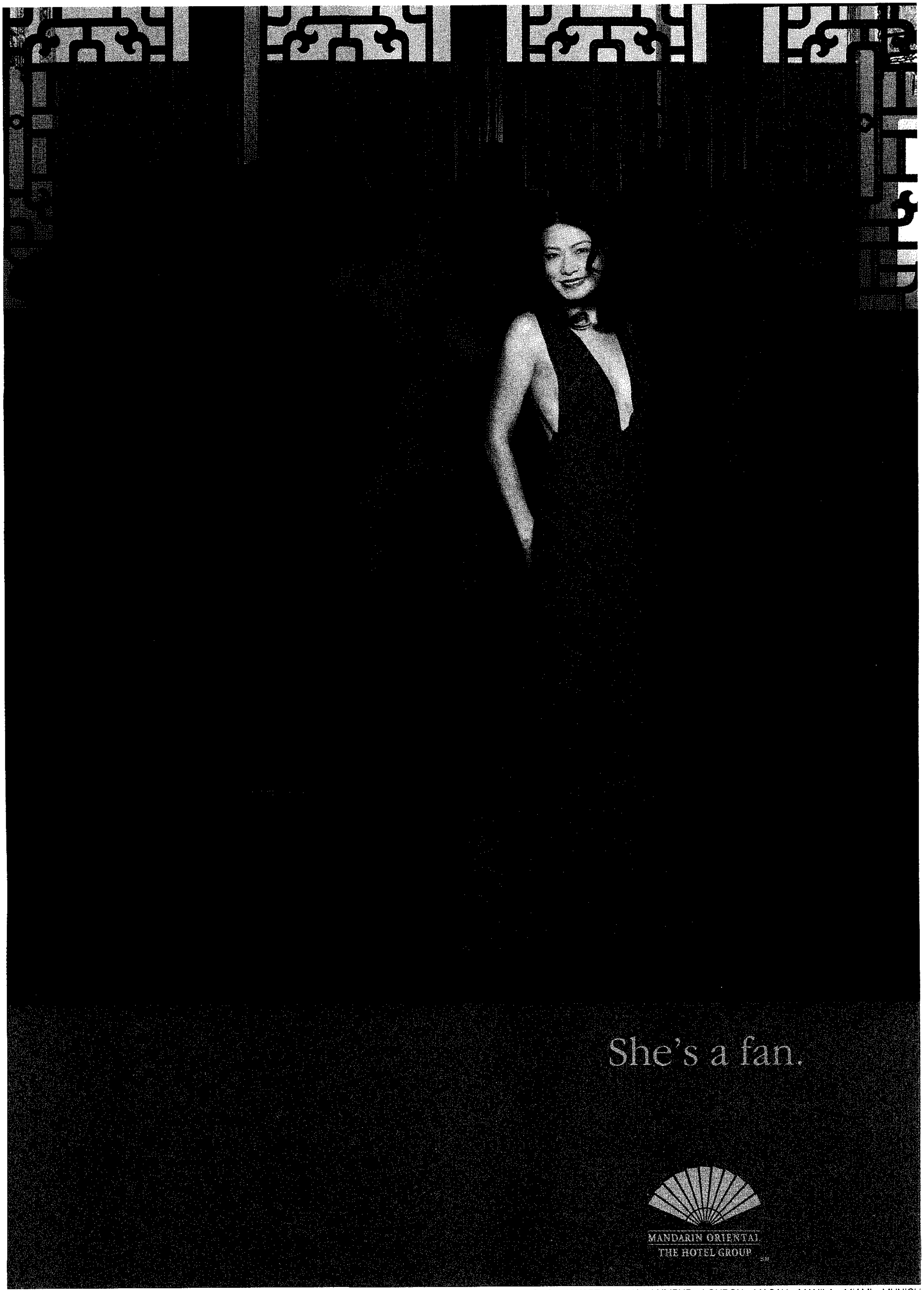
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. March 14-20 (call for showtimes): "A Journey of Dmitry Shostakovich" (2006, Oksana Dvornichenko and Helga Landauer).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." March 16 at 9:30: "Kundun" (1997, Martin Scorsese), introduced by the film's editor, Thelma Schoonmaker.

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." March 16-17: "The Fifth Element" (1997, Luc Besson).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THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Classics." March 18 at 8 and March 20 at 7:30: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The films of Tian Zhuangzhuang. Except where noted, all films are in Mandarin. March 14 at 1 and 6, March 15-17 at 1:30 and 6:10, March 18 at 2 and 6:45, and March 20 at 3: "The Go Master" (2006). ♦ March 14 at 3:15 and 8:15, March 15 at 8:15, March 17 at 8:20, and March 18 at 4:10: "The Blue Kite" (†). ♦ March 15 and March 17 at 3:45, March 16 at 3:45 and 8:20, and March 18 at 9: "Springtime in a Small Town" (2002).

READINGS AND TALKS

TRIBUTE TO CARCANET PRESS
Eavan Boland, Marilyn Hacker, Stanley Moss, Paul Muldoon, and other writers turn out to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the esteemed British publishing house. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. For more information, call 212-254-9628. March 13 at 7:30.)

BENJAMIN BLACK
John Banville, who won a Booker Prize for his novel "The Sea," reads from his début crime novel, "Christine Falls," which he wrote under the pen name Benjamin Black. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary. March 14 at 7.)

STELLA ADLER STUDIO OF ACTING
The poets John Ashbery and Grace Schulman read from their work. The playwright and actor Wallace Shawn will provide the introductions. (31 W. 27th St., 3rd fl. 212-689-0087. March 19 at 7.)

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB
The Community-Word Project, a nonprofit organization that places artists and writers in underserved New York City public schools, presents the poet and former journalist Patricia Smith, who will read from her work. She'll be joined by students from local public schools. A benefit. (15 Gramercy Park S. For more information, call 212-962-3820. March 19 at 6:30.)

TOM BISSELL
The journalist and travel writer reads from his latest memoir, "The Father of All Things: A Marine, His Son, and the Legacy of Vietnam." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 22nd St. No tickets necessary. March 19 at 7.)

K.G.B. BAR
Denise Duhamel and David Trinidad host a reading from "Saints of Hysteria: A Half-Century of Collaborative American Poetry," a new anthology that they co-edited with Maureen Seaton. The readers include Elaine Equi, Noelle Kocot, Chris Martin, Susan Wheeler, and Rachel Zucker. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. March 19 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

NATIONAL SMALL PRESS MONTH
National Small Press Month is in its eleventh year; it features a number of activities designed to promote and support publishing houses where the book runs may be modest but the subjects and passions are grand. One noteworthy event scheduled for this week is a marathon reading with thirty-one writers, one for each day of the month, including Nachid Rachlin (published by City Lights), Lynne Tillman (published by Soft Skull Press), and Sam Brumbaugh (published by Open City Books). (The reading takes place at Mo Pitikin's House of Satisfaction, 34 Avenue A, on March 16, starting at 6. No tickets necessary. For more information about National Small Press Month, visit www.smallpressmonth.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
To provide a ceremonial start to its week of Asian-art sales, **Christie's** presents "Art for the Way of Tea" (March 20), an offering of a private collection of objects made for that most authentically Japanese of rituals, the tea ceremony; the sale features tea containers, vases, food vessels, and ceramic bowls dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Then it's down to business with a big auction of Japanese and Korean art, held later the same day, headlined by an exquisite sixteenth-century Japanese screen depicting feathery pines in the hazy moonlight, attributed to Hasegawa Tohaku. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's**, also in an Asian mood, gets things moving with a single-owner sale of the Concordia House collection (March 19), a large selection of jades, ceramics, and archaic bronzes acquired by two passionate Midwestern collectors during their travels. A sale of Chinese ceramics and works of art continues into the following day (March 19-20), featuring archaic bronzes, ceramics, tomb pottery, jades, and even rhinoceros-horn carvings; hard to miss is a three-foot gilt-bronze Buddha from the Ming dynasty. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Doyle** catches the wave with its own wide-ranging sale of objects and works of art from China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia (March 20), covering the Neolithic period, the twentieth century, and everything in between. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.) ♦ The British designer Ross Lovegrove's space-age designs are the subject of a selling exhibition at **Phillips** (March 21-April 4). (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)

ANNA BHUSHAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
WHAT'S NEW?
March 21-April 1

The thirty-sixth year of the "New Directors/New Films" series, screening at MOMA and Walter Reade Theatre, offers work from home (including "Day Night Day Night," about a suicide bomber's plan to attack Times Square) and around the world (including "The Other Half," about a lawyer in China), as well as a retrospective of documentaries from previous years. (212-721-6500.)

DANCE
CHARMER
March 30-31

Gulabi Sapera, known as Gulabo in India, brings her company of dancers and musicians to perform the ecstatic dances and music of the Kalbeliya Sapera snake charmers of the Thar Desert, in Rajasthan. (212-545-7536.)

NIGHT LIFE
THEIR DAY
April 5

The Philadelphia-based five-piece band Dr. Dog trots into the Bowery Ballroom for what promises to be a triumphant rendition of the skewed, organ-driven retro rock on its new album, "We All Belong." (212-533-2111.)

ART
CULTURAL EXCHANGE
April 11-July 1

New shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem include the painter Henry Taylor's first solo museum show, a Brancusi-themed installation made by five recent CalArts graduates, and a collaborative project from the Egyptian painter Ghada Amer and the Iranian artist Reza Farkondeh. This engaging last entry is a series of objects that were mailed back and forth between the two artists, each adding details as they went. (212-864-4500.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
NOH BOUNDARIES
April 12-14

As part of its centenary celebrations, the Japan Society presents the Rouen/Haute-Normandie Opera's production of Benjamin Britten's "Curlew River," a fascinating chamber opera set in medieval Europe that draws deeply on the traditions of Noh theatre. (212-715-1258.)

Gulabi Sapera, the Gypsy Queen of Rajasthan.

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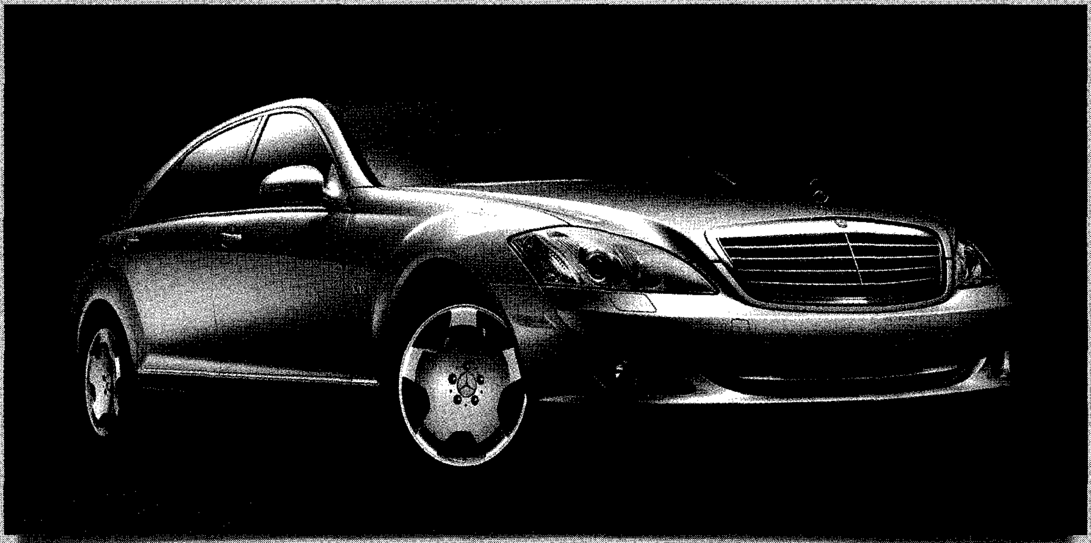

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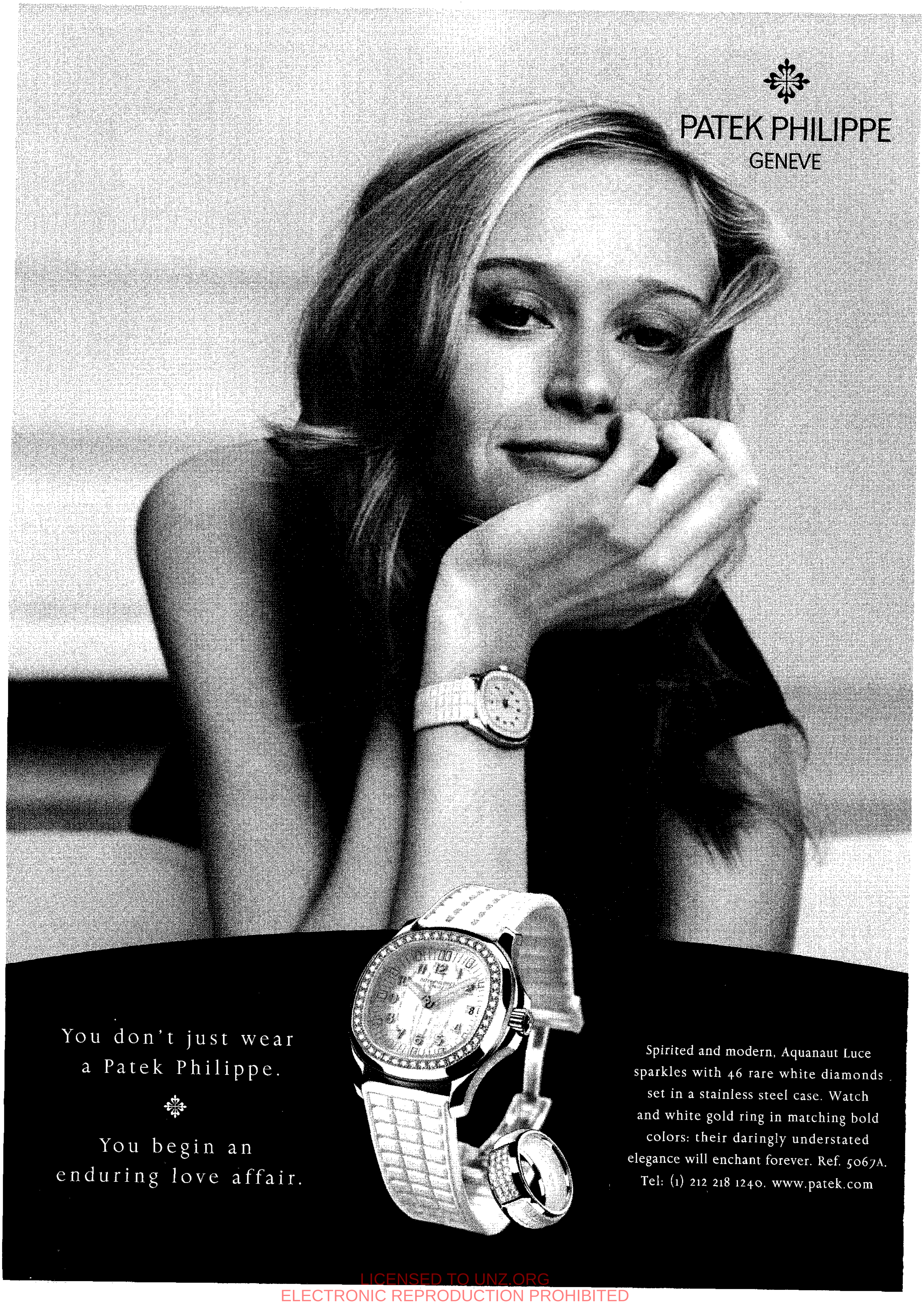

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THE
NEW YORKER

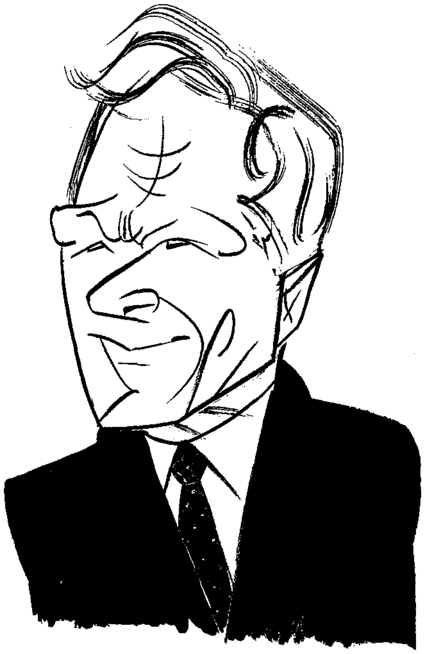
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
VERDICTS

It took a jury ten days of deliberations to find I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, Jr., the former chief of staff for Vice-President Dick Cheney, guilty of perjury, obstruction of justice, and making false statements to federal investigators. On one level, it's hard to say why it took so long, because the evidence against Libby was both straightforward and overwhelming. The central issue in the case was how Libby learned that Valerie Plame Wilson, the wife of the diplomat turned Bush critic Joseph C. Wilson IV, worked for the C.I.A. Libby testified repeatedly that he had first been informed of her status in a telephone conversation with Tim Russert, the NBC newsman. But Patrick Fitzgerald, the special prosecutor, called five witnesses, all of them former executive-branch colleagues of Libby's, who said that they had each separately discussed Valerie Wilson's employment with the defendant. In the capstone to the government's case, Russert testified that he did not tell Libby that Wilson worked at the C.I.A., because, at the time of their phone call, he did not know it. It's one thing to claim a faulty memory, as Libby did, through his lawyers, at the trial. It's quite another to concoct an imaginary conversation, as the jury ultimately decided that Libby had done. But, if the evidence was so strong, why did the jury find the case so difficult?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The investigation arose, of course, after the C.I.A. sent Joe Wilson, a former Ambassador to Gabon, on a mission to Niger, in 2002. He went to look into reports that Saddam Hussein had tried to purchase uranium yellowcake, which is used in the production of nuclear weapons, in that country. Wilson found no such attempt by any Iraqis, and said nothing publicly about his trip for more than a year. But after he heard President Bush touting the nonexistent African connection as a justification for the invasion of Iraq, including in a now notorious passage in his State of the Union address, Wilson started speaking out, first to journalists and then, on July 6, 2003, in an Op-Ed piece in the *Times*. In prose that could have come from a middling spy thriller—"Through the haze, I could see camel caravans crossing the Niger River"—Wilson recounted his journey and raised the question of whether the war was based on, as he delicately put it, "the selective use of intelligence."



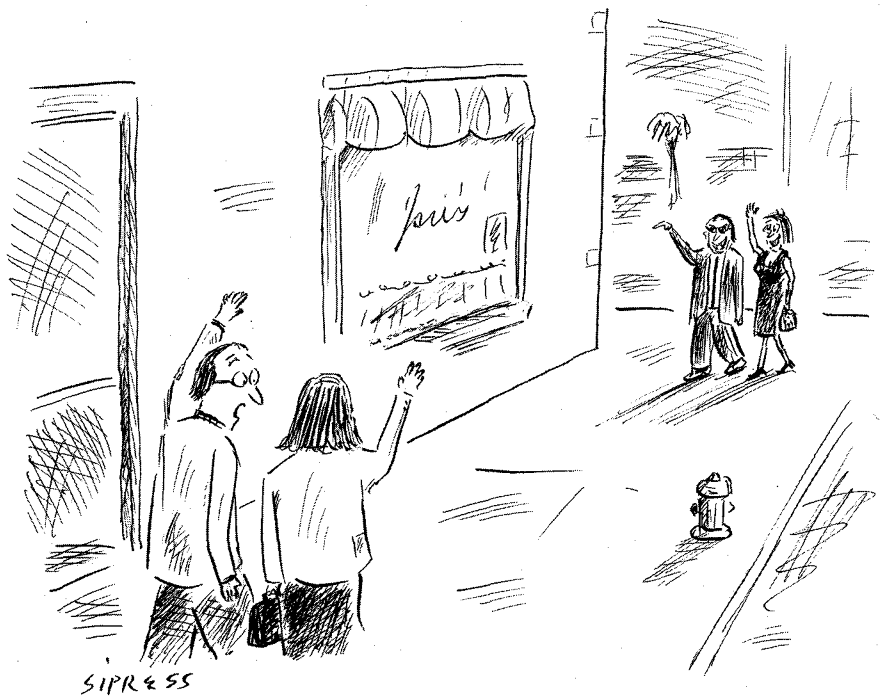
Wilson had no more attentive reader than the Vice-President, who carefully underlined his copy of the Op-Ed and jotted a series of indignant questions for his staff in the margin. "Have they done this sort of thing before?" Cheney asked in his meticulous handwriting. "Send an Amb. to answer a question?" Most of all, the notes showed that Cheney was in no mood for innocent explanations. His last question suggested darkly, "Or did his wife send him on a junket?"

The famous Cheney snarl was practically audible. Ambassador Wilson had questioned the basis for the Iraq war, so he had to be discredited—in this case, by showing that his trip to Africa had been dreamed up by his wife, who was, indeed, a C.I.A. employee. (In fact, Valerie Wilson did not send her husband to Niger, which is not generally a sought-after destination for Washington junketeers.) Cheney's intention was to defend the war by going on the offensive against critics like Wilson, and he wasn't the only one in the Administration doing it. Gossip about the Wilsons was passed around with something close to glee. Ari Fleischer, the press secretary at the time, said that Libby told him that Valerie Wilson's status was "hush-hush." Richard Armitage, then the Deputy Secretary of State, confided to Bob Woodward in an interview in June, 2003, that Wilson's "wife works in the agency. . . . Everyone knows it." Woodward replied, paraphrasing Armitage, that she was "high enough up that she can say, 'Oh, yeah, hubby will go.' " (The tape was played at the trial.) Saving string for his next book, Woodward did not disclose the information at the time, but Armitage was fond enough of this conversational nugget that he repeated it to Robert Novak, the syndicated columnist. So did Karl Rove, the White House aide, who was in on the secret, too. On July 14th, Novak wrote a column about Joe Wilson's mission to Niger, which blew his wife's C.I.A. cover. Republicans tend to look askance at the disclosure of the identities of C.I.A. agents, but it was only because of pressure from congressional Democrats that Fitzgerald was appointed to look into the leak.

In other words, the Administration reacted to Ambassador Wilson's perfidy—his decision to tell the truth about one aspect of the fictional justifications for the war—like a crew of deskbound Tony Sopranos. Still, Libby's colleagues were more careful than he was. Nobody was charged with violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act, which requires a specific intent to disclose a secret agent's identity. (Just to be safe, Fleischer demanded—and received—immunity before agreeing to coöperate with Fitzgerald.) No one except Libby was proved to be lying to investigators. And Libby has not said that anyone told him to perjure himself. Still, in a moral sense, if not a legal one, it was clear that the business of discrediting the Wilsons was a group undertaking, and it's therefore easy to see why the jury struggled with laying blame for the whole operation on Libby. One juror, Denis Collins, said after the trial that he agreed with the defense claim that Libby was a "fall guy" for Cheney, among others, but Collins also thought that Libby was guilty; under the circumstances, both conclusions made sense. After the verdict, the Vice-President, as is his custom, wasn't answering questions from the press. Perhaps Congress, if it finally gets around to investigating why the nation went to war under false pretenses four years ago, will have better luck with him.

The most fevered supporters of the war immediately began pressuring the President to pardon Libby. For the time being, Bush is probably hoping that the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, which has been very accommodating to the Administration, especially in cases relating to the war on terror, will do the work for him and figure out a way to dispose of the case—or at least drag it out until after the 2008 election. (That's the customary moment for controversial pardons, like the one Bill Clinton gave Marc Rich, the fugitive financier—who, as it happens, was once a legal client of Scooter Libby's.) The ruination of Libby, by all accounts an intelligent and dedicated man, is not cause for celebration. But George Bush shouldn't be giving pardons; he should be begging the nation's.

—*Jeffrey Toobin*



"Quick! Remind me—are they handshakers, huggers, single kissers, or kissers on both cheeks?"

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL
IMAGINARY FRIENDS

Hunan Dynasty, a few blocks from the Capitol, is not generally considered to be one of Washington's better Chinese restaurants, which is saying something, because, Chinese-food-wise, Washington is not New York, or, for that matter, Philadelphia. Even its devotees—for example, New York's senior senator, Charles Schumer—admit that the restaurant "always has the faint smell of disinfectant." Nor does Hunan Dynasty draw a notably powerful crowd. One night last week, as Schumer sat down for dinner, the only other diners were a group of out-of-town electric-company executives and Representative Dennis Kucinich, of Ohio, who is running for the Democratic Presidential nomination. "I believe I'm going to win New Hampshire," he said, adding, "The tofu here is very good."

Schumer, on the other hand, is more of a Szechuan-shrimp, spicy-beef sort of federal legislator. "I love this restaurant," he said, and meant it. Hunan Dynasty, he said, serves cheap, honest, middle-class food, and Schumer styles himself a cheap and honest member of the middle class. The middle class, in fact, has been the key to his success. Schumer, though less widely known than New York's junior senator—whom he has dragged, on occasion, to Hunan Dynasty; she even hosted a party there for his new book, "Positively American"—has been more instrumental

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than Hillary Clinton in rejuvenating the Democratic Party. It is fair to say that only George W. Bush did more than Schumer to help the Democrats retake the Senate last year. As chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Schumer recruited such ostentatiously centrist candidates as Claire McCaskill, Jim Webb, Jon Tester, and Bob Casey, and he raised enormous amounts of cash to fund their campaigns.

Liberal élitism, he said, as he stirred Sweet 'N Low into his tea with a chopstick, alienates middle-income families from the Party. "Middle-class people don't think everybody should have to drive a tiny little car to achieve improvement in global warming," he said. Invoking opponents of expanding the tuition tax credit to the middle class, he went on, "If we listened to the New York *Times* editorial board, we'd have twenty-one votes in the Senate."

Schumer says that he is accompanied everywhere he goes by two imaginary middle-class friends, who advise him on all manner of middle-class concerns. Their names, until recently, were Joe and Eileen O'Reilly. "For the book's sake, we wanted them to be more national," Schumer said, "so they became the Baileys." The Baileys live in Massapequa, in Nassau County, a town that is invariably known on Long Island as "Matzoh-Pizza." The Baileys are both forty-five years old: Joe works for an insurance company, Eileen is a part-time employee at a doctor's office. They worry about terrorism, and about values, and they are patriots—"Joe takes off his cap and sings along with the national anthem before the occasional Islanders game," Schumer wrote. He elaborated, "They're not ideologues. They're worried about property taxes. It's the tax they hate. And that's what Democrats don't get." He has also drafted the Baileys in defending the C.I.A.'s human-intelligence program: "Had Joe and Eileen been in the room after the hum-int screwup, they would not have indulged in the blame game, gutted the human-intelligence program, or weakened America."

The Baileys, Schumer said, sometimes dine out—not often, because of the cost—and they like Chinese. Which raised the question: What would the Baileys eat, if they were here at Hunan Dynasty? "The more conventional stuff," Schumer said, "but they're with it."

They're with it?

"I mean, they're not *not* with it." Schumer looked at a plate of steamed chicken and vegetables, and said, "They wouldn't order that. They would order kung pao chicken."

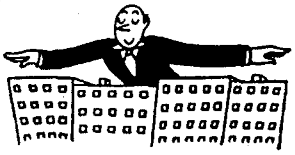
It was suggested to Schumer that he is a little bit weird. He acknowledged this to be true. "They're real for me," he said. "I love the Baileys."

As swing voters, Schumer said, "the Baileys were very anti-Hillary when she ran in 2000, but they voted for her in 2006." He went on, "They like Rudy. It depends on how he plays it. If Rudy continues to adhere to the right-wing Republican line, just cutting taxes for the wealthy, he won't get their vote."

It turns out, Schumer said, as he ate an almond cookie, that there are some actual Baileys in Massapequa, and he once met a couple of them. Mrs. Bailey was a kind woman, "very nice, a nice lady," but the actual Mr. Bailey was a Republican. Even worse, Schumer said, he had a goatee. "Joe Bailey would never have a goatee."

—Jeffrey Goldberg

DEPT. OF BUILDING
COMPOUND ON PARK



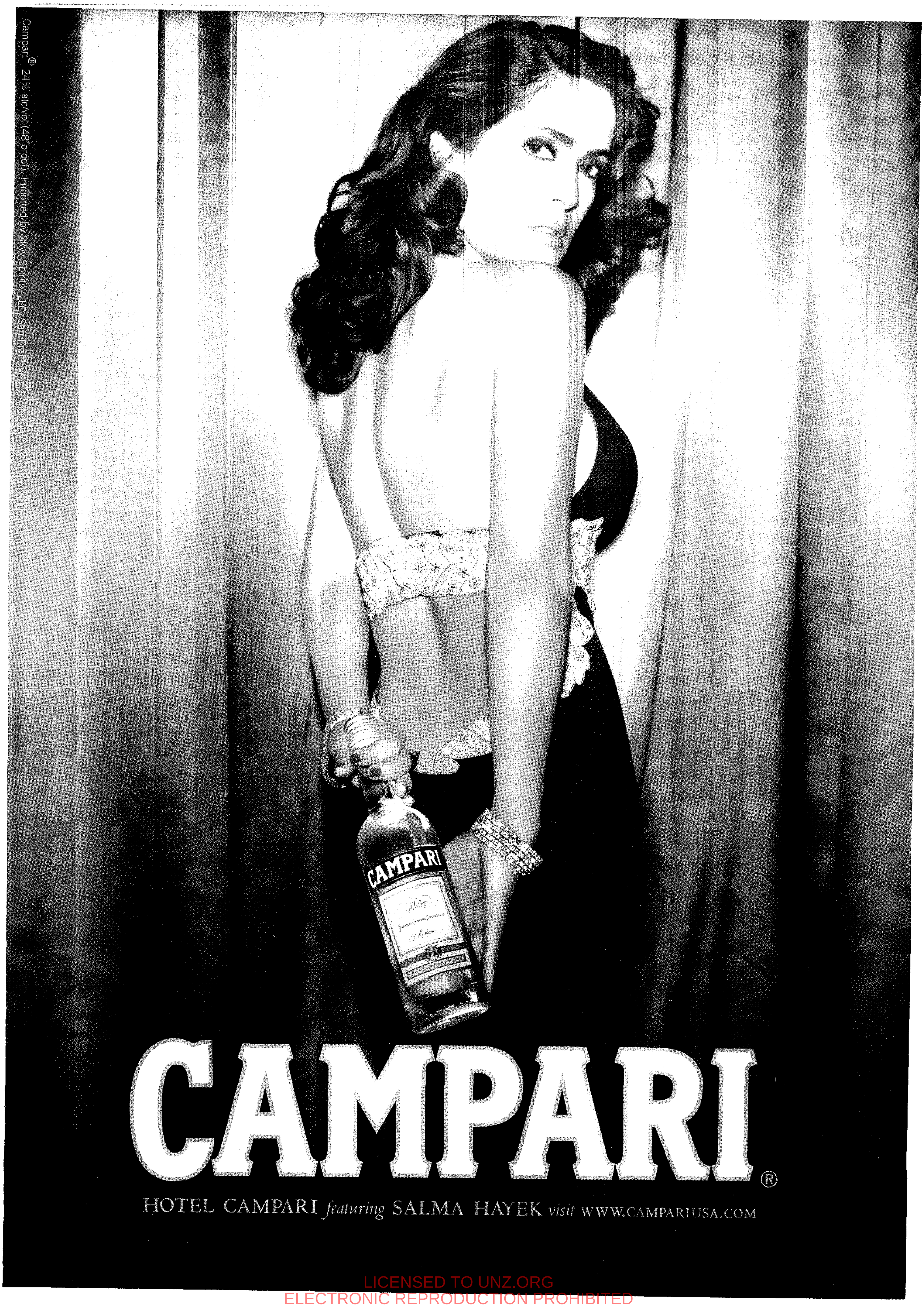
It is probably safe to assume that Santiago Calatrava is the only architect in New York who lives in a town house on Park Avenue. It is an even surer bet that Calatrava is the only architect who has what amounts to a compound of three town houses on Park Avenue. A few years ago, Calatrava, who designed the soaring train station planned for Ground Zero, decided to move his family from Zurich to New York. He purchased an 1885 Queen Anne-style town house with bay windows, one of a pair on the east side of the avenue between Sixty-ninth and Seventieth Streets, and among the few surviving private houses anywhere on Park. "We had stayed around there in hotels, and you get used to the neighborhood," he said, as if to explain why he didn't join the parade of architects downtown. "It is very pleasant. And I like the polarity between Lexington and Madison. One is for shoemakers and bread, the other is for fashion. It is all very nice."

After Calatrava redesigned the house from top to bottom and moved in with his wife, Robertina, the town house just to the north, a slightly grander building with a limestone façade, became available. It has an excellent pedigree—it was used for years by the philanthropist Paul Mellon as his New York office—and Calatrava decided to buy it and put his own office there. Then the mate to Calatrava's first house, just to the south, went on the market, and he figured he ought to buy that one, too. He is planning to turn it into living quarters for his three grown sons.

Calatrava just finished renovating his new office. It is sleek and white, without any of the swooping curves and anthropomorphic details for which his work is known. (Many of Calatrava's buildings are said to look like birds; he designed a skyscraper in Malmö, Sweden, that is called the Turning Torso.) The office looks more like the headquarters of a hedge fund than those of an architectural firm. There are white marble floors and black computers and conference rooms with glass tables and a huge video screen. The art—all made by Calatrava—ranges from a set of sculptures on pedestals in the main hall to a huge bas-relief in bright cobalt blue leaning against a wall.

Calatrava spends much of his time sketching and sculpting, and the shapes often turn up as buildings or bridges. He works in a large room on the third floor, facing Park Avenue. There is no computer, but there is a set of watercolor paints and an easel. In some ways, the house seems to function as a private retreat, as if Calatrava, who was born in Spain, saw New York as a place to escape from the pressures of his firm, which remains based in Europe. He has hired only a small staff to work with him here, and he communicates by video conference almost every day with his main offices, in Zurich and Valencia.

Moving to New York also put Calatrava closer to several of his most important projects, including a spiral apartment tower for Chicago that, if built, will be the tallest building in the country. He has also designed an apartment building, which the New York developer Frank Sciame wants to build downtown, made up of a series of stacked cubes. But the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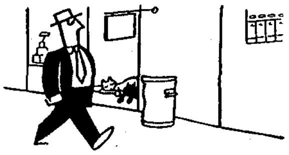
Port Authority's new train station at Ground Zero is Calatrava's most compelling reason for settling here. The station, which will have a huge main hall with a curving glass roof set between steel ribs, has been the most widely praised piece of new architecture planned for Ground Zero, but it is estimated to cost upward of two billion dollars, and Calatrava feels that he needs to be vigilant so that nothing compromises the project. "Everything in New York is expensive. You have to bring everything in across the water—it is like building in Venice," he said. "We are now building one of the biggest train stations in Europe, in Liège. We are doing it for three hundred million euros, and it is much bigger than the building at Ground Zero. But my client here has never asked me to compromise, and we will do this on budget. When it is done, it will give you the same sensation as entering the great hall of Grand Central. You will feel the value of horizontality. New York usually goes to the vertical. We are playing very much this card, of trying to deliver great spaces."

Calatrava sees the United States as a country that needs his professional expertise. "Spain is spending two hundred billion euros on infrastructure, and why aren't we doing that here?" he said. "The viaducts and the bridges here are not in great shape. The roads here are bad, the bridges—all the works by Robert Moses are now sixty years old. They will all need to be redone, and I can do these things."

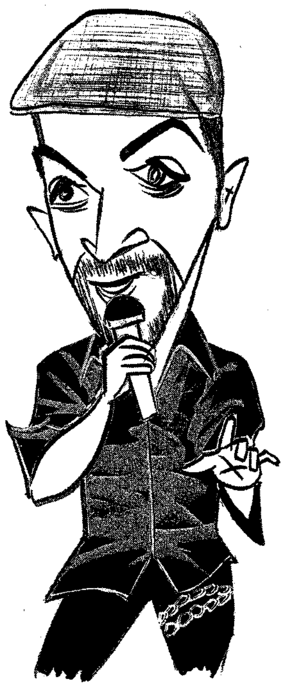
—*Paul Goldberger*

THE BOARDS
LOCAL BOY



The life of twenty-seven-year-old Lin-Manuel Miranda, the writer of and lead actor in the new musical "In the Heights"—about the ups and downs of the residents of a block in Washington Heights—seemed pretty serene the other day as he did some errands in the old neighborhood. Miranda, who is trim and dark-haired, with a goatee, and is as eager-beaverish as they come, lives on upper Broadway, a few blocks from his parents' house, across the street from Inwood Hills Park, where he was born.

"I'm the luckiest guy in the whole world," he said, taking a chair at his local barbershop, where he was getting a shape-up on his goatee. "My dad, Luis Miranda, is a Democratic political consultant and lobbyist, and founder of the Spanish-English weekly *Manhattan Times*. My sister Luz is an executive at the paper. My dad and my mother"—a child psychologist, also named Luz—"encouraged me my whole entire life to do what I wanted. So I found places—Wesleyan, for one—that had people who felt as passionately as I did about things like Hitchcock movies. *Corta un poquito de la chiva*," he said to the barber, without changing his tone, and pointed to one side of his chin. The barber gave a solemn nod. "He doesn't know a word of English. Like everybody else up here. They don't need to learn English," Miranda said. "Nobody knows who I am, so I can still enjoy my privacy. But I was recognized this morning, on the A train at West Fourth Street, because my picture on the poster for the show is up there. A woman sat down next to me and said, 'I liked your show better than "Miss Saigon."' She talked to me all the way to 181st Street."



Lin-Manuel Miranda

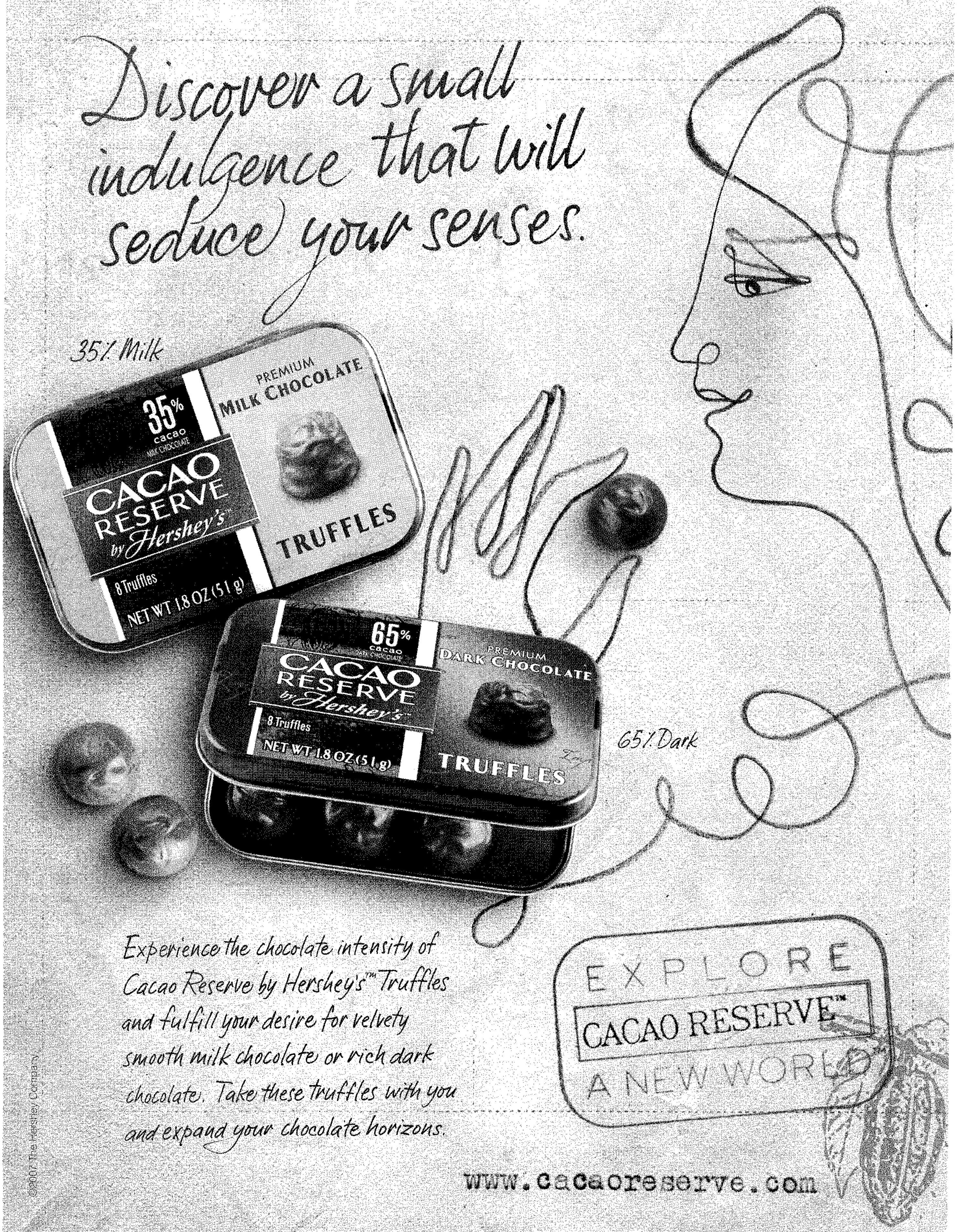
First stop after the barbershop: a sandwich place called Munchies, where the counterman, unsmiling and without a word, placed a foamy drink before Miranda. "The best milkshake in the world," Miranda said. "Puts the pounds on, orange shake with condensed milk. I lost about ten pounds in the show this month, doing all the dancing, singing, rapping." He finished it in a long gulp. "Now I've got to do some hanging out at Last Stop, the copy center next door. All the action happens at the copy center. My cousin Landa's best friend, Jenny, works there. They make Dominican Republic-flag buttons and sell them in bulk. They made T-shirts to celebrate our opening, for the whole cast of our show, with our logo and the name of each person on each shirt. Landa lives in my parents' house with her son, Miguel. My parents, all my life, opened our home to cousins, friends, anybody who needed a place to stay. Some of them live there for years. We have a long wooden table that my mother got from the Salvation Army. It's big enough to accommodate everybody, including community people from back in the nineteen-eighties, when Mayor Koch tapped my dad to work as his specialist on Hispanic affairs. When I was seven, I spoke at City Hall at his induction."

He went on, "I was so lucky to grow up in a house overlooking this beautiful forest. It has this beautiful spot where the Indians sold Manhattan. My dad's old nanny, Edmunda Claudio, from Puerto Rico, where he was born, lives with my parents now, too. She raised me. Every time she sees me, she worries about me being too thin. I can do no wrong in that woman's eyes. She's our *abuela*. There's always an *abuela* at home."

"In the Heights" started out, seven years ago, as a love story with Latin music, Miranda said. "It had a completely different set of songs and a different story. Tom Kail, the director, put me together with Quiara Alegría Hudes to rewrite the book and new songs and a new story. But the show is still about my neighborhood. And the leading character is an *abuela*."

Miranda had to head down to the theatre to rehearse a big fight scene, reminiscent of "West Side Story." But first he looked in on his parents' house, at the edge of the forest. On the second floor, he found Edmunda Claudio in a corner sleepily watching "Family Feud" on an ancient TV set. Six-year-old Miguel came in, carrying his Rollerblades. They both spent a good half hour exchanging hugs with their *abuela*.

—*Lillian Ross*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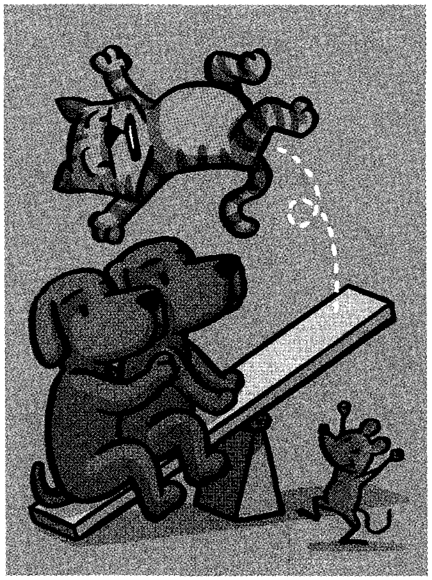
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
SATELLITE SISTERS

When the satellite-radio companies XM and Sirius announced, last month, that they were planning to merge, it looked like a futile attempt to flout antitrust regulations. The merger would benefit Sirius and XM—which, despite signing high-profile figures like Howard Stern and Bob Dylan, have cumulatively lost close to seven billion dollars—but it would confront radio listeners with a satellite-radio monopoly. Not surprisingly, then, when Sirius's C.E.O., Mel Karmazin, appeared before Congress to defend his plans, he was grilled by legislators convinced that regulators would block the merger. The deal, though, is far from dead. Thanks to an intellectual revolution that, over the past three decades, has transformed the way the government assesses mergers and monopolies, we may yet end up with only one satellite-radio provider in America. And, surprisingly, we may be all the better for it.

Antitrust law in the U.S. rests on two documents—the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act and the 1914 Clayton Act. Their underlying principles are clear (competition and lower prices are good, collusion and price-fixing bad), but the laws themselves are remarkably vague, and regulators have had much leeway in enforcing them. In the era after the Second World War, for instance, the government took an aggressive stand against mergers. In 1962, it blocked a deal between the third-largest shoe company in the country and the eighth-largest, even though the new company would have owned just five per cent of the shoe market. A few years later, it barred two California supermarkets from merging, despite the fact that together they controlled less than ten per cent of the market and had many competitors. Bigness, regulators seemed to assume, was always bad.

The idea that if mergers were bad for competition they were bad for the economy was intuitively appealing. But it wasn't always accurate, as a group of law professors and economists, usually called the Chicago School, set out to show in the nineteen-seventies. Much antitrust regulation, they argued, did not benefit the economy but just protected small businesses; it could even make consumers worse off. (Most obviously, economies of scale allow bigger companies to produce more for less, which can lead to lower prices.) This meant that regulators should scrutinize deals through a different lens: if a merger reduced competition but enhanced "consumer welfare," it should be approved. Later economists have complicated these arguments—there's now a post-Chicago School—but the idea that mergers should be measured by their impact on "consumer welfare" remains central to antitrust law.

Even by these standards, though, the XM-Sirius deal looks sketchy, since monopolies created by merger are usually bad for consumers. So why does the deal have any chance at all? It comes down to the question of what market XM and Sirius are in. If it's just satellite radio, then they are competing only with each other and the deal would be sure to send prices soaring. But it makes more sense to see XM and Sirius as part of the bigger radio and digital audio markets and thus in competition with AM/FM, HD, and Internet radio. In that case, even a merged company would have only a small percentage of radio listeners, and competition would limit its ability to raise prices.



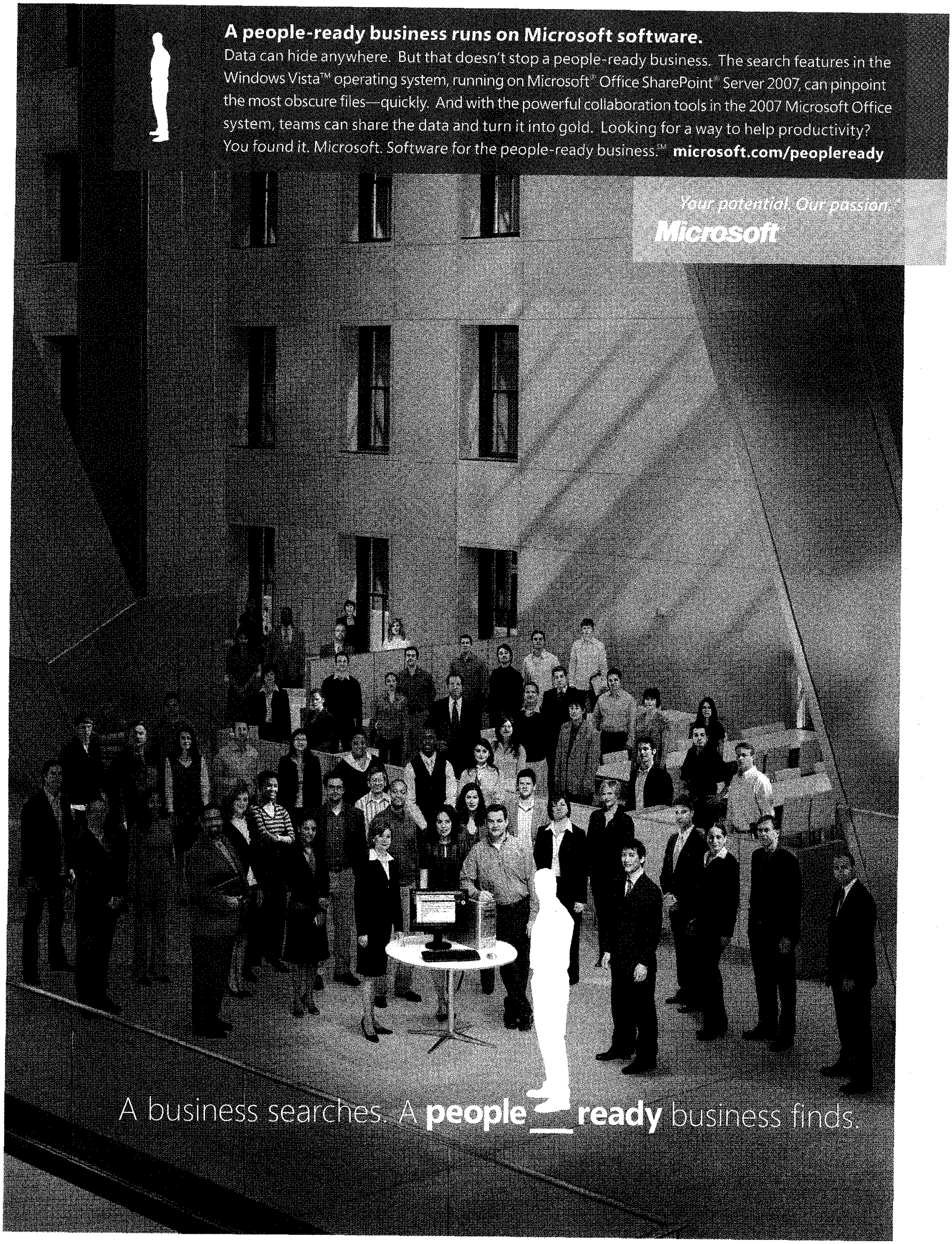
Consumers, then, have little to fear from a merged satellite company in the radio market, and they may actually have a lot to gain. Dominated by chains like Clear Channel, AM/FM radio has become a catalogue of bland choices, pre-programmed playlists, and syndicated talk. A recent study by the Future of Music Coalition found that four companies received fifty per cent of all radio advertising revenue and had nearly fifty per cent of all listeners. Even among competitors, there is often tremendous overlap in music playlists; in this environment, XM and Sirius, which offer real diversity across three hundred channels, are a gain for consumer choice. And there's no reason to think that this diversity would ebb after a merger; no one wants to pay thirteen dollars a month to hear the same songs he could have got free from his local KISS-FM.

The National Association of Broadcasters, which represents commercial radio stations, has lobbied hard against the deal, arguing that XM and Sirius compete only with each other. But the very fact that broadcasters are fighting the merger demonstrates that they view Sirius and XM as a threat. Similarly, for fifteen years AM/FM stations have done everything they could to cripple satellite radio, lobbying the F.C.C. to stop its roll-out in the nineteen-nineties and persistently trying to limit the types of programming XM and Sirius can carry. Just last month, a bill was introduced in Congress—for the third time in as many years—that would bar satellite stations from providing local traffic and weather.

Broadcasters understand that a merger between Sirius and XM would help extend satellite radio's reach, making it a more formidable competitor. Many consumers have hesitated to subscribe to satellite because they didn't know which company would survive. And desirable content is split between the companies: if you want major-league baseball and Bob Edwards, you need XM, but if you want N.F.L. games and Howard Stern, you need Sirius. Allowing Sirius and XM to merge would eliminate this problem in one stroke. And that would significantly increase the competitive pressure on traditional radio stations, perhaps forcing them to abandon their cookie-cutter model. Paradoxically, by reducing choice you could stimulate more diversity. Sometimes, it seems, you can have fewer competitors but more competition.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

DRESSIN' TEXAN

Houston and Dallas decoded.

BY PATRICIA MARX

The first time I visited Texas, I wore a beige polyester-blend lab coat with reinforced slits for pocket access and mechanical-pencil storage. I was attending a local booksellers' convention, having just co-written a pseudo-scientific book about how to regain your virginity, and my publicist suggested that the doctor getup would attract attention. It did. Everyone thought I was the janitor. Lesson No. 1: When in Texas, do not dress down.

Lesson No. 1: When in Texas, do not dress down.

A few weeks ago, I returned to Texas, my luggage this time crammed with the best that my closet had to offer. Wrong again. In my sombre New York clothes, I was the sole black-and-white TV in a showroom of high-def plasma screens. Lesson No. 2: The Lone Star palette is sparkly sea green, sunshine yellow, lavender flecked with gold, and turquoise—lots and lots of turquoise.

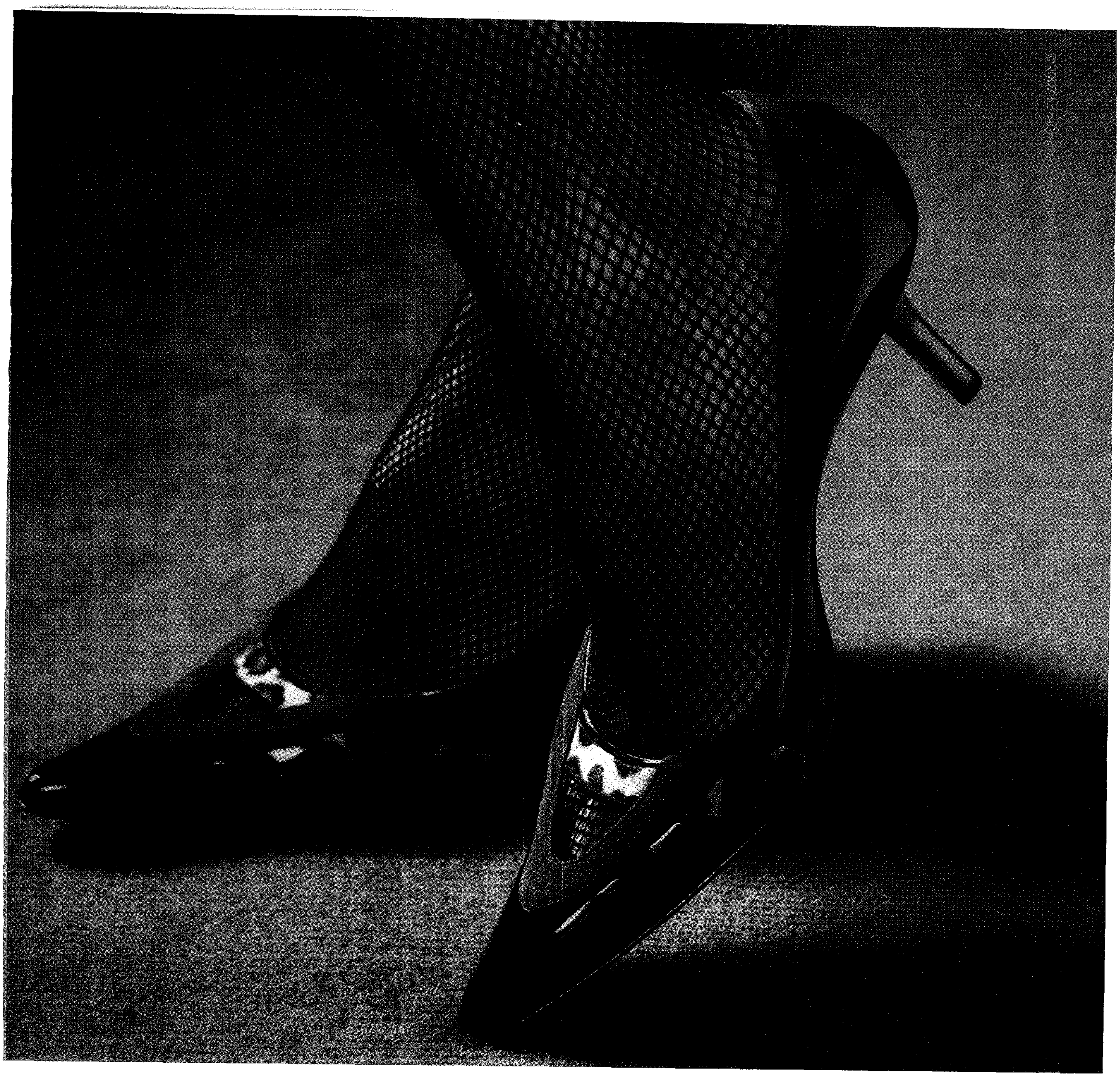
And the prevailing dress code is Cinderella after the fairy godmother has turned her rags into glittery silk chiffon, brocade, and taffeta. (Dallas's brand-new Barneys, misjudging the tastes of its clientele, chronically understocks its formalwear.) If there is a bodice, it is beaded or ruched or encrusted with crystal drops. If you can walk in your shoes, the heel is not high enough. Not that you will ever travel by foot here in the land of mega-S.U.V.s. "We'd like a table for five, sir," I overheard a woman say to the maître d' at the Bistro Moderne (2525 West Loop South). "And we don't want to walk."

Chances are, assuming you are a Someone, you will attend a charity luncheon today and three black-tie benefits tonight—one of which is being held in your honor to thank you for chairing the other two. If you are a Very Important Someone, you will be celebrated next month as one of the Best Dressed Women in Houston at the gala co-sponsored by Neiman Marcus to benefit the March of Dimes (which will be a long march, considering the approximately six million dimes that are expected to be raised). In Texas, fashion fuels fund-raising, fund-raising fuels fashion, and fossil fuel fuels them both.

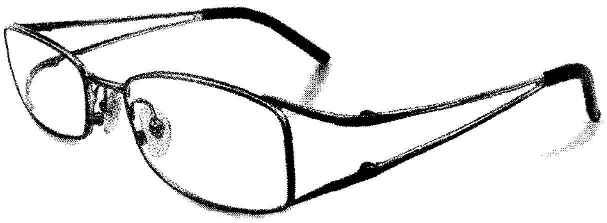
The theme of one of the evening's events is sure to be Candy Land/Tango/Mardi Gras/Saturday Night Live/Las Vegas/Southern Nights, and don't forget that you are encouraged to be costumed accordingly. Your photograph will duly appear in the next issue of *Paper City*, the groovy document of fashion and society published monthly in Dallas and Houston (separate editions). Lesson No. 3: Don't even think about putting on the same Oscar de la Renta for tomorrow night's ball.

In other words, I learned, it behooves you to shop. Let's start in Houston, where the mishmash of motorways is known as the Spaghetti Bowl. And don't forget your beverage. "Do you know about Styrofoam?" Betty Newton, the co-owner of a boutique called à bientôt (3268 Westheimer Road), asked me in a confidential whisper. According to Newton, in Texas, where a Dr Pepper or a Diet Coke for the car is de rigueur, Big Gulp-size Styrofoam cups with phrases like "Grown-Up Juice," "High Heels . . . Low Morals," and "Happy Anniversary Tom and Judy" are collector's items and party favors. À bientôt stocks plenty of them ($8 per dozen), as well as exquisite knockoff purses and jewelry ("We don't have a real thing in the shop!" Newton said) and clever products that address fundamental wardrobe perils. Miss Oops ($10) is a miraculous sponge that removes sweat and makeup from clothes; Save My Feet ($20) is a cream that prevents blisters for eight hours (I guess nobody in Texas has ever walked longer than that); and Stiffs ($10) are little weighted strips of adhesive that hold down the hems of your pants so that they do not get stuck in your shoes, a problem that I didn't know existed.

"Can you send it to me? Because I have to keep moving," I heard a stylish woman say to a stylish man, presumably her personal shopper, at Tootsies (4045 Westheimer Road), a miniature department store. The "it" was a delicate pale-pink linen Andrew Gn A-line coat with silver leather paillettes ($2,700), which would join other "it"s being speedily dispatched to the woman's house: a Roberto Cavalli



these shoes have you written all over them,
do your glasses?



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top made of paper-thin leather so distressed that it looks like crumpled paper ("Fabulous for the South of France at night, right?"; $3,460), a black Dolce & Gabbana duchesse satin coat with a ruffled leopard lining ("How cute for the boat!"; $3,010), and a white Armani shirt with vertical seaming in front and back, because you can never have enough white shirts ("They go to the dry cleaner's three times and it's goodbye"; $450).

Dallas/Ft. Worth has more shopping centers per capita than any other city in the country, and, in the spirit of keeping up with the Joneses, Houston is not far behind. In both places, there are countless discount outlets, too: open-air Italianate arcades that look like gingerbread retirement villas, and indoor off-price malls with fine art, fountains, and chandeliers. One exception in Houston is an up-to-the-minute store called Mix (2707 Colquitt Street), a stand-alone cement-and-cedar box designed to evoke the effect of an offshore oil platform. Evelyn Gorman, the owner, told me she brought Balenciaga to Texas and introduced Commes des Garçons to Houston. Among my favorite items there were a navy brushed-cotton Balenciaga military cap ($345), a kidney-shaped clutch in vibrant orange-and-aqua crocodile, designed by Aseef Vaza ($890), and, on the floor, propped against the wall, a light box, by a local artist named Claire Ankenman, depicting Lucille Ball getting a mammogram (part of the store's fabulous art collection, and not for sale).

If you're looking for something more traditional—perhaps an YSA Makino ball gown of plum and mauve taffeta embroidered with rose-and-violet crystals ($3,500)—proceed up the wide spiral staircase to the second floor of Elizabeth Anthony–Esther Wolf (the result of a two-store merger), where you will find just the thing for your daughter's prom or wedding, the Margaritas for the Cure breakfast, or the Miss U.S.A. pageant (the former and current Miss Texas shop here). Rest assured that no one else will have it. "With gowns of this calibre," a sales associate said, "we carry only one."

"Texas is misunderstood," a celebrated Houston socialite told me over lunch at a bistro where her name was also the name of a sesame-crusted baby-salmon dish. ("I'm on every menu in town," she said.) She unbuttoned her sable jacket and continued, "The girls here are very cosmopolitan. They walk into stores, holding their *Vogues* and *Harper's Bazaars*, and say, 'I want this; I want that.' I am constantly fighting the 'Texan' stereotype. I've never been to a rodeo, I don't own cowboy boots, and I don't have a ranch."

On the other hand, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, held every year in February and March, is a big deal, attracting nearly two million visitors, which translates into a lot of cowboy boots. And for both the real and the weekend cowboy in town, including George and Laura Bush, there's Pinto Ranch (1717 Post Oak Boulevard, Houston), an immense warehouse of a store designed to look like a lodge, roofed with Texas cypress trees. "This place could hold, I don't know, thousands of pounds of snow," the owner, Walter Pye, told me one seventy-degree day in February. The place also carries saddles ($2,900 to $4,500), dusters ($180), python boots ($1,400), belt buckles from the "ten best silversmiths in the country" ($250 to $8,000), and fringed and spangled outfits to turn a cowgirl into a showgirl. I noticed a beautiful green lambskin jacket paired with a long suède skirt embellished with grommets, silver studs, and Western beading ($950 and $1,460, respectively).

Texas hairdos, the saying goes, are "fried, dyed, and shoved to the side." But are they? Of all the conversations I had in Houston, those about hair raised the most hackles. "Girls here do get their hair blown dry," a woman with short reddish hair told me. "But if you go to Cipriani and Michael's in New York at lunchtime, that's where you'll really see the so-called Dallas dos."

And so, for research purposes, I had my hair cut by Ceron, who is famous enough in Houston not to need a second name and is sought-after enough to own thirteen tuxedos. He gave me a great haircut, although I felt that the blow-dry was a little flat. (Of course, I did tell him more than twenty times that, please, I did not want to have voluminous hair.)

The place where I would see *really* big hair, Houstonians kept telling me, was Dallas. They said I would also find "matchy-matchy outfits," "square finger-nails," "men with hair spray," "showoffs," and "head-to-toe Escada."

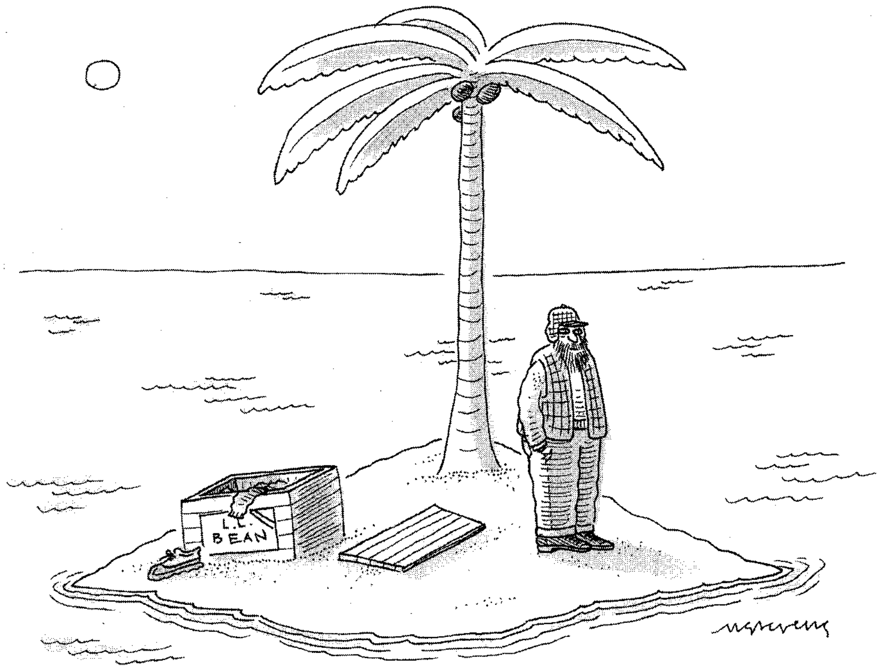
"Dallas lives beyond its means," a Houston man who has a man-made lake in his back yard said. "Dallas is 'Oh, you belong to this country club?' and 'Didn't your grandfather start a railway?,' whereas we are a meritocracy," said a woman whom I met at a party held in a twenty-five-thousand-square-foot house that appeared to be carved out of marble. Lesson No. 4: Houston cannot tell the difference between Dallas, the city, and "Dallas" the TV show.

So what does Dallas think of Houston? To tell you the truth, it didn't come up. As for what Dallas thinks of Dallas: "Flashin', dashin', and throwin' around money." "Jeans with dressy blouses and fancy shoes." "Even if you're casual, you're not grungy—you're clean." "All the jewelry you can get on you at one time." "Plastic-surgery capital of the country." "Largest fund-raising city in the United States." "Ninth most billionaires in the world."

Dallas can't be talked about without talking about Neiman Marcus, the hundred-year-old emporium that brought non-Texas apparel to Texas and then exported it to the rest of the country. Neiman's was the first retail establishment to understand the concept of promoting the store, rather than the stuff. There were (and are) legendary sales, fashion shows, charity events, a lenient credit policy, and a very caring sales staff that indulges the customer's every whim. "Remember that dress Nicole Kidman wore in 'Moulin Rouge'?" one loyal customer asked me. "I saw a photograph of her in it and somehow Neiman's managed to find me the dress."

Neiman's has spawned its own body of folklore. There is, for instance, the story about the gentleman who died but whose funeral was postponed until the tie he had ordered from Neiman Marcus arrived. Or the one about the rich cowboy who showed up at Neiman's during the holiday season. "I want that and that and that and that," he said, pointing at the display windows. "I want my wife to come down Christmas morning and see them all." Also: A man called Neiman's from jail, explaining that he was a very loyal customer. The store posted his bail.

The only branch of the four Neiman Marcuses in the Dallas area that is not in a mall is the one on Main Street. Betty Lidji, a personal shopper, is set up in a nook not too far from the fur department, on the second floor. A shopper can sip a cappuccino there as she looks over the pieces that Lidji has pulled off the racks for her. On a recent afternoon, these included a Chanel jacket in navy polished silk with a fitted band inset above the waist and little buttons ($4,980), a long black



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Missoni cardigan with colorful wavy stripes ($1,015), and a bouncy short sable coat (reduced to $29,500 from $49,500, which, according to Lidji's client, was a fantastic price, but who needs another fur?).

Stanley Korshak (500 Crescent Court), a competing ultra-high-end department store, is housed in a grand limestone building encased in frou-frou latticework that resembles a pavilion left over from the World's Fair. "Our clients are the super-rich," Crawford Brock, the store's owner, said. "Have you heard of Kiton?" he asked. "It is the finest suit-maker in the world, and we have the largest room of Kiton in North America." Some other things they have are: Bottega Veneta baby booties in woven green leather ($190), a small caramel-colored crocodile tote by Nancy Gonzalez ($2,750), and a fabulous jewelry department full of pieces that a hip Gabor sister or a jet-set pirate might relish, including a Michael Tracy ring made of gold, pink, yellow, and orange diamonds ($15,000).

A boutique called Forty Five Ten (4510 McKinney Avenue) is a modish little all-purpose stop—if your purpose is to acquire, say, a Gregory Parkinson crocheted cotton twinset in bright red and yellow ($535), a delicate white porcelain dish ($295), a wrought-iron candelabra that looks like and is as big as a small tree ($1,410), or a chicken-salad panini at the café ($11). "It's a lot like 'Cheers,'" a devoted customer named Lucy Wrubel told me. "Everyone knows your name. Plus, you can buy Commes des Garçons."

Grange Hall and Urban Flower (4445 Travis Street) may well be my favorite place to spend money in all of Texas. The artsy home-décor shop, next to some nothing-special storefronts, looks like a please-touch museum of cool stuff from all over the world: a pair of fabulous floor lamps by the Belgian designer Nora de Rudder, each with a shade made of a gigantic goose feather ($2,000 apiece); burl bowls from Kenya ($85); leather goods by Natalia Brilli, from Paris, including an attractive chocolate-brown bangle with embossing ($240) and a fringed silver kidskin wallet-style purse that dangles leather-covered beads ($925).

Angie Barrett, a philanthropist, threw a party for about fifty guests not long ago in her main closet. That would not be the closet with floor-to-ceiling shelves of collectible cowboy boots or the closet devoted to workout clothes, but the one with the two chandeliers, the coffee table, the pair of ponyskin-upholstered chairs, the cheetah rug made from Barrett's mother's old coat, and the dizzying number of dresses and skirts, all organized by color. "It is more like my library than my closet," she said, although one rarely finds in a library a clothes rack devoted to bathrobes, another with just gold skirts, and another holding summer print frocks. Nor does one usually find two shelves of Roger Vivier shoes (including a perfect-for-never-walking pair that has bows on the soles), a shelf of identical crocheted slipper boots purchased from a store in L.A., or a stack, six feet long by two feet high, of T-shirts.

"I'm in the middle of something," Barrett said when I arrived, explaining that she was getting her house ready to put on the market. "So maybe you could visit for a while with the couture gowns." I was led to a closet the size of your living room, where fifteen breathtaking creations were draped on chairs in such a way that they looked like ladies-in-waiting. I admired a black satin Versace with heavy black embroidery, corsetry in the back, and a long train of mermaid ruffles in blue-gray suède. "I wore it to the Beaux-Arts Ball," Barrett said, "and the gown is so heavy that at some point I thought I might be dragging along some furniture." Her favorite gown is an oyster-colored Alexander McQueen "shipwreck" dress, so called because it is asymmetrical and is strategically ripped and straggly. Although she has no intention of parting with *that*, she is looking to sell a flesh-toned Halston reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe's "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" gown ($2,500), a purple chiffon Chanel cocktail dress ("Chanel sometimes makes me look—heaven forbid—my age!"; $1,200), and a beaded strapless Bill Blass in floral chiffon ("I'd have to be on the verge of organ failure to fit into some of these dresses"; $2,500). Lesson No. 5: The best place to shop in Texas is in the closet of someone who is planning to move from a nine-thousand-square-foot house to a thirty-five-hundred-square-foot apartment.

At a café on my last night in Dallas, a waiter came over and gestured toward a man at the door. "Are you comfortable with that gentleman?" he whispered to the friend I was with. The man was her husband, who was joining us late. He was wearing two-hundred-dollar jeans and a sweater from Barneys; the waiter had worried that he was riffraff. Lesson No. 6: In Texas, jeans, however expensive, are still jeans.

On the way to the airport to return to New York with my suitcase of black and gray clothes, I stopped at Zara, the Spanish retail chain that sells trendy, cheap clothes knocked off from designer trends. There I found a pair of Texas-worthy silver high-top sneakers that are now among my prized possessions ($24.99 on sale, but, since Zara introduces new items every week, the shoes may no longer be available). Lesson No. 7: It is not necessary to increase the credit limit on your Visa when travelling to Texas.

There is some finery that even the most cunning personal shopper cannot lay her hands on. I am referring to the Balenciaga raiment on display until May 27th at the Meadows Museum, in Dallas. Standouts include a bustled black velvet gown with ermine tails and a red velvet cocktail dress with pearl embroidery. Many of the ensembles had previously belonged to Claudia Heard de Osborne, a Texas oil heiress. In 1975, when Osborne was preparing to donate the clothes to the Texas Fashion Collection, she wrote, in a letter to the curator, "If you see any little drops of water on the dresses, they are my tears. I cried as I packed, as I loved each and every dress, coat and cape." Lesson No. 8: Packing is hard. ♦

FOR ONCE, WE'RE SPEECHLESS DEPT.

From an advice column in the Lansing (Mich.) State Journal.

For fun and to try to mix this up a little, you two might develop a verbal or visual cue that is subtler than simply asking for sex. For instance when one of you mentions Vice President Cheney, that's your code.

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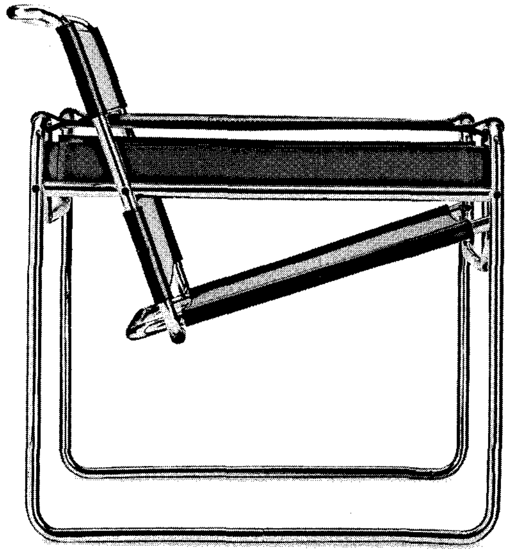
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LETTER FROM LONDON

REALITY ART SHOW

The national obsession with the Turner Prize.

BY SARAH THORNTON

Phil Collins, a video artist, was at a pay phone in the subway in Brooklyn when he found out that he'd been nominated for the Turner Prize, the world's best-known contemporary-art competition. "I was incredibly startled," Collins said. "The prize might be a stage for mockery—I might make a fool of myself on a grand scale. I imagined a scene out of a Brian De Palma movie. I felt like Carrie, covered in pig's blood." Collins was taking a cigarette break on the massive neoclassical steps of Tate Britain, the original Tate museum, in London, which sits upriver from its sexier, younger sibling, Tate Modern. An enormous statue of Britannia, helmet on her head, trident in her fist, glowered down from the roof. Collins, who is thirty-six, has an asymmetrical haircut and wears carefully culled thrift-shop clothes. "It took me a week to accept the nomination," he said. "I had to think hard about the joys and threats of exposure."

The Tate inaugurated the Turner Prize in 1984, and its history is, in part, a tale of newspaper headlines. In 1995, Damien Hirst made news on several continents when he won the prize after a show featuring a work in which a cow and its calf were bisected and displayed in four tanks of formaldehyde. In 1999, Tracey Emin received so much attention for her entry—an installation that included her own unmade bed, littered with blood-stained underwear, condoms, and empty liquor bottles—that many people believe she won the prize, even though she was only a finalist. And in 2003 Grayson Perry, whose principal medium is ceramics, and who likes to wear dresses befitting a Victorian six-year-old, accepted his award by saying, "It's about time a transvestite potter won the Turner Prize!"

For the past several years, sales of contemporary art have been setting records all over the world. When the focus on the present is such that no one waits for history to make decisions about what is great, good, or simply competent, marks of validation like the Turner Prize become more important. Unlike other art prizes, such as the Guggenheim's Hugo Boss Prize and the Whitney's Bucksbaum Award, which are just a line on an artist's C.V., the Turner Prize is a cross between the Academy Awards and "American Idol"; people take sides, argue about the contest at dinner parties, and even place bets on who's going to win. Every May, four artists are short-listed by a jury of four judges selected by Sir Nicholas Serota, the Tate's director. The artists must be younger than fifty, based in Britain, and have attracted the jury's attention with an outstanding show sometime during the previous year. In Octo-

STEPHEN KRONINGER

The Turner is like a cross between the Academy Awards and "American Idol"; people take sides and even bet on who will win.

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Victoria Roberts

"Curls are back."

• •

ber, each of the four nominees opens an exhibition in one of the grand rooms at Tate Britain. Eight weeks later, the jury reconvenes and chooses a winner. That evening, at a glamorous awards ceremony broadcast on television, the winner is presented with a check for twenty-five thousand pounds by a celebrity host (hosts have included Brian Eno, Charles Saatchi, Zaha Hadid, and Madonna, who distinguished herself by saying "motherfuckers" on live TV).

The nominees for the most recent Turner Prize could hardly have been more different from one another. In addition to Phil Collins, the video artist, there was Rebecca Warren, a sculptor; Tomma Abts, an abstract painter; and Mark Titchner, who works in several mediums.

One morning in October, several dozen journalists and photographers showed up for a press preview of the Turner Prize exhibition. Rebecca Warren's room contained three types of sculpture: gestural figures made of bronze, unfired clay forms, and vitrines that held bits of detritus, including a cherry pit and a used cotton ball. The bronzes were like Giacometti sculptures that had been given a good meal. The clay pieces had a look that was more preschool than art school.

A petite curator in low-rise black jeans briefed the journalists on Warren's work. "These female approximations embody unleashed and exuberant creativity," she said, adding that Warren's influences included R. Crumb, Edgar Degas, and Auguste Rodin. The press people weren't buying it. "Unfired clay?" one murmured. "Is that half baked or entirely unbaked?" The photographers cheered up a bit when they discovered the suggestion of a few breasts protruding from the mounds of gray clay. (When the short list was first announced, the *Daily Star* ran a story headlined "BOOBY PRIZE FOR ART." It showed one of Warren's figures with gargantuan buttocks next to a speech bubble that said, "Does my bum look big in this?")

The Turner Prize consecrates and desecrates artists at the same time. For many artists, the opportunity to exhibit in the hallowed rooms of Tate Britain, in a show that attracts a hundred thousand ticketed visitors, is too enticing to pass up. For others, the possibility of a public loss or of brutal scrutiny by the press is too daunting, so a string of refuseniks has accumulated. Last year, for instance, a twenty-nine-year-old Scottish painter named Lucy McKenzie turned down a Turner Prize nomination. McKenzie has worked as a porn model, and her œuvre is sometimes sexually explicit (one painting shows her eating a bowl of soup below a framed image of a woman masturbating); the tabloids would certainly have taken an interest. According to a friend, McKenzie was unwilling to "compromise the flexible and critical dialogue" around her work.

Phil Collins's work takes the media as one of its key themes, so, despite his initial anxiety about being nominated, he found the process to be an ideal platform. A few days after the preview, I was following him through Tate Britain when he stuck his head inside Room 28 of the permanent collection, where two video screens were playing his 2004 piece, "they shoot horses," a moving depiction of nine young Palestinians in a dance marathon in Ramallah. In the video, they wriggle and twist, occasionally belly dance, and eventually drag their tired bodies around to pop tunes ("Set me free, why don't you, babe"). The marathon was eight hours long, but an hour of tape went missing at the Israeli border, so the work has a running time of seven hours. "It was really upsetting," Collins said. "The third hour was a very good hour, but at least it wasn't the eighth."

Collins walked on, through the Duveen galleries, making his way to his "office," a kind of war room behind a large pane of glass, which was part of his Turner Prize exhibition. He disappeared through a hidden door and emerged on the other side of the glass. His team was there, researching a video called "return of the real," about people whose lives were ruined because they appeared on reality-television programs. One woman was answering a hotline that Collins had set up for victims. Collins looked out through the glass and gestured to a small sliding window. He poked his head out. "I needed to be a victim of my own logic, so here I am," he told me. "A monkey in the zoo."

A few days later, I met Collins at a pub on Charing Cross Road. Although he officially lives in Glasgow with his boyfriend, he spends most of his time travelling—to Belfast, Belgrade, Bogotá, Baghdad—and making elaborate videos with the locals. He lit a cigarette and sighed. He had just come from filming a "home visit" with a reality-TV subject—a woman who, after appearing on the show "Wife Swap," found that her son was being beaten up in the schoolyard. Collins is fascinated by survival and what he calls the "specific beauty of people living in situations of horror." In his video "baghdad

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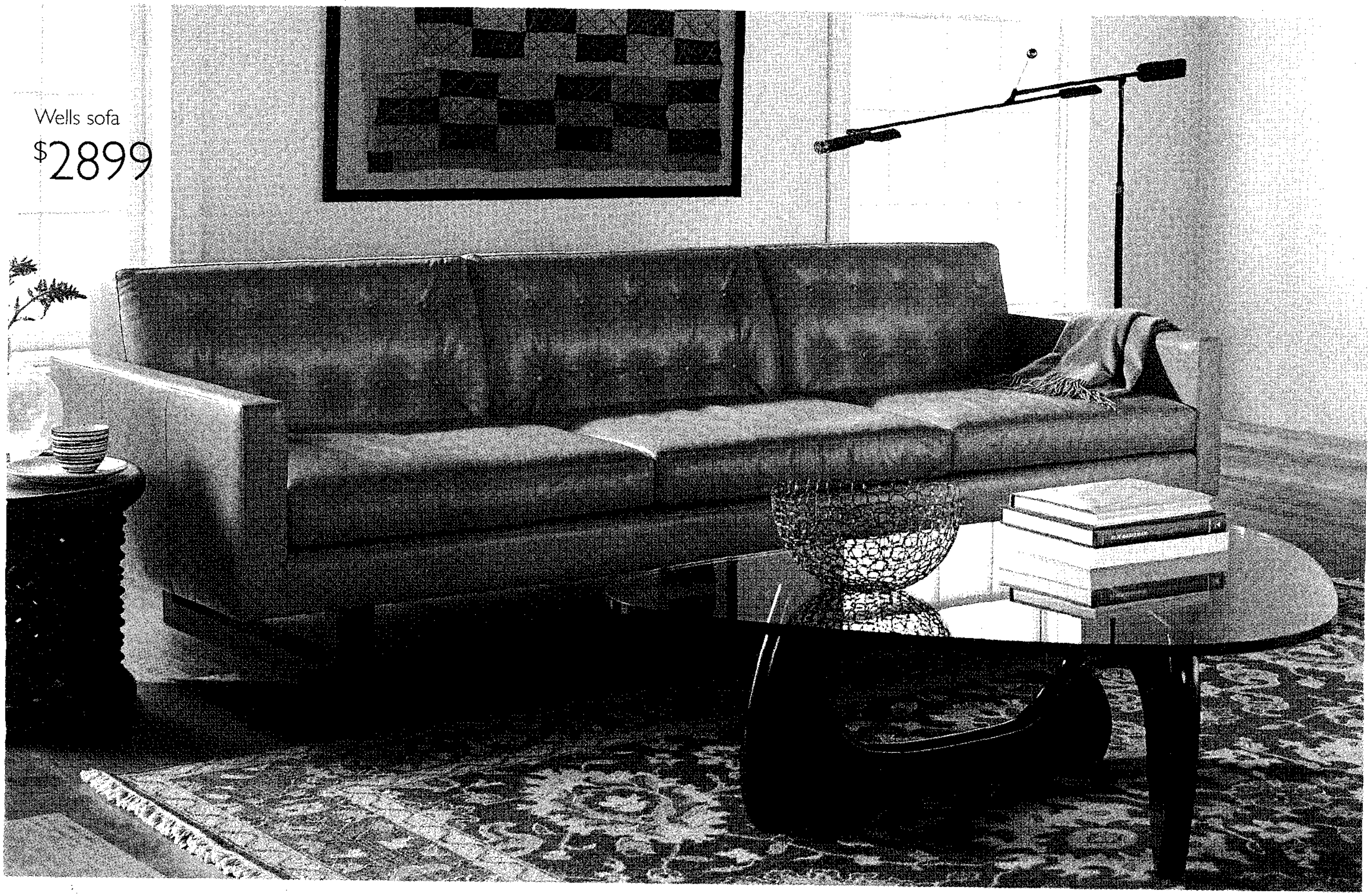

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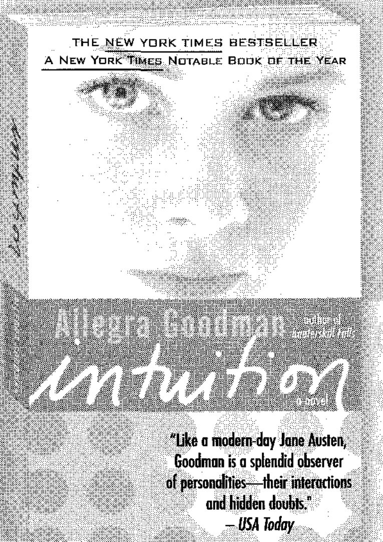
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screentests" (2002), for example, Iraqi men and women sit in front of the camera, fidgeting, flirting, and staring. The piece was filmed before the bombing of Iraq, and it's impossible to watch it without wondering what has become of the participants.

Collins ordered a round of drinks, then realized that he had no cash. He doesn't have a credit card or a cell phone. He has never driven a car, and, until last year, he didn't own a washing machine. Although his art relies on his extreme sociability, he doesn't know many artists and rarely goes to openings. "I found art school to be liberating, but the commercial art world?" he said. "Is there anywhere you could possibly feel smaller? It's the only place where you can give away free booze and no one turns up." He shook his head. "I can't bear it when someone says, 'I have to make art or else,'" he said. "That is a very privileged thing to say." Collins said that he didn't feel much rivalry in connection with the prize: "I have no interest in pushing to the front of the queue. I would rather somebody else got off the train first."

Housed next to Tate Britain in a red brick building called the Lodge, Nick Serota's office is Edwardian on the outside and modernist on the inside. Serota was running late getting there one day; he was on a catamaran whizzing up the Thames from Tate Modern. The son of a Labour minister, he studied economics and art history at Cambridge and wrote his master's thesis on J. M. W. Turner (the prize's namesake). He joined the Tate in 1988, when it was little more than a fine outpost of national heritage, and he now presides over an empire of four museums: Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Tate Liverpool, and Tate St. Ives. With more than four million visitors a year, Tate Modern is the most popular modern-art museum in the world.

Serota glided in ten minutes late. "Very sorry," he said in a crisp accent. "I was giving a tour to American collectors. They arrived late and, in turn, delayed me." Serota has close-cropped brown hair and thin lips. He is used to being in the public eye (the tabloids call him "Sir Nick"), and he took a seat and methodically rolled up his sleeves. "There is nothing sacrosanct about the status of any prize," he began. "The Turner Prize will only carry authority while it continues to be awarded to artists who are seen, in a relatively short time, to have merits that perhaps people didn't recognize at that moment. It's only as good as its last outing."

He went on, "All competitions of this sort are iniquitous in terms of drawing distinctions between artists of very different kinds. The same is true of the Booker Prize. How do you compare one novel with another?" He pinched the bridge of his nose. "But I came to recognize that the format of the prize—the early announcement of the short list and the public display of four artists' work—spurs people to reflect about art."

Serota has chaired the Turner Prize jury every year since 1988. He appoints the four judges, who are selected, he said, for their individuality. "Generally speaking, people are ambivalent about becoming a judge," he said. "They are very conscious of the fragility of new art and the vulnerability of the artists." At the first meeting, in May, Serota advises the new judges to short-list only artists whom they regard as capable of winning. "There shouldn't be someone brought in simply as a makeweight, because it can be an ordeal to be a nominee," he said. "Artists can find it hurtful to be trivialized and caricatured by the press."

Tomma Abts's studio is a modest room, lit by a skylight, in an artist-run complex called Cubitt, in North London. The space is devoid of visual references—no postcards, no clippings, no art books other than her own catalogues. She employs no assistants and sits to paint with her canvas flat on a table or held in the crook of her arm. Abts, who is thirty-nine, was born in Germany and has lived in England for twelve years. With shiny shoulder-length hair, she is, like her paintings, controlled and beautiful in an inconspicuous way.

"When I start a painting, I have no idea what it will look like," she said. "I invent the criteria as I go. Each painting is a remnant of thought processes I've gone through." She gestured at five geometric abstract canvases in various stages of completion. Her pictures are all the same size—nineteen by fifteen inches—and she produces fewer than eight paintings a year. "I wouldn't mind if I was quicker," she said.

"My work hovers between illusion and object, and it reminds you of things," she explained. "For example, I create a daylight effect, or a feeling of movement." In Abts's paintings, the bright lines that pop tend to be left over from the original wash, and the sombre backgrounds that recede are among the last strokes applied to the canvas. "I always work inside out," she said. "I know a work is finished when it feels independent of me."

Abts gives all of her paintings titles that she selects from a dictionary of German first names. We lingered before one called "Meko," a red-white-and-green painting with an Op-art feel. She frets about which paintings are exhibited together and exactly how they are hung, as if she were arranging the seating plan for a dinner party and it would be a disaster if "Teete" sat too close to "Folme." When I asked if I could see her dictionary of first names, Abts looked alarmed, moved toward the table, and tossed a sweater over the mysterious volume. "It is better if it is unknown," she said.

Another subject that Abts won't talk about is Chris Ofili, the last painter to win the Turner Prize, in 1998. (The following year, his painting of the Virgin Mary, which was propped on two clumps of elephant dung, was denounced by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani as "sick" when it was shown at the Brooklyn Museum.) Abts was Ofili's girlfriend then, so she had an intimate view of the competition. It took her three days to decide whether to accept the nomination. "I want to participate in things that are about art, not artists' personalities," she said. "I wanted to stay an artist and not suddenly become something else. Like a media person."

So far, the press had been mostly kind to Abts's exhibition, but the *Daily Mail* described her paintings as "squiggles and shapes [that] don't symbolise anything." Still, she had already discovered that, whether she won or not, being shortlisted had an effect. The New Museum, in New York, had decided to honor her with the first solo show to be held in its new building, in April, 2008.

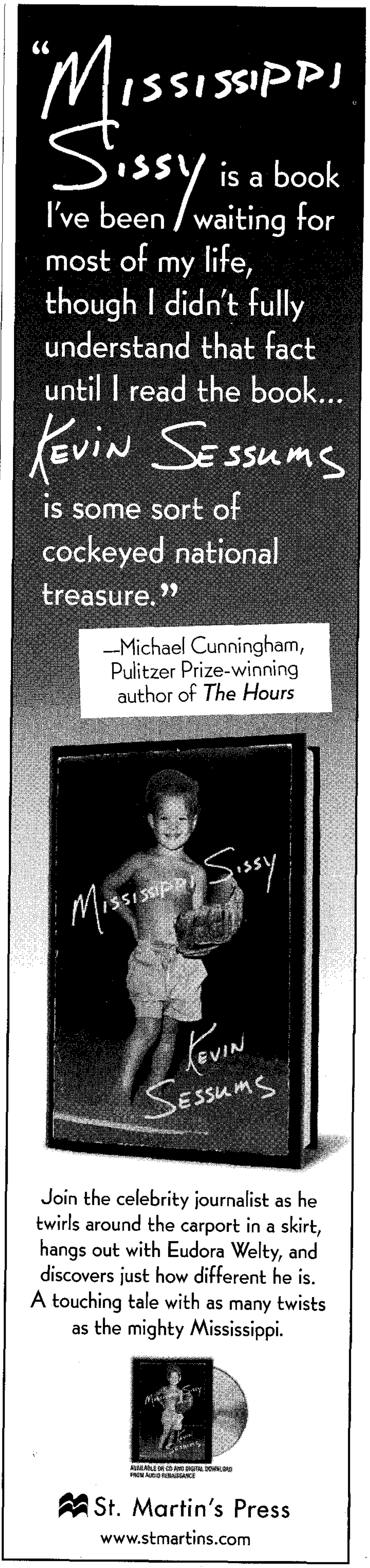
It's hard to imagine two artists more dissimilar than Tomma Abts and Phil Collins. She creates quiet, restrained pieces that turn their back on the specificities of the everyday. He gathers raw documentary experiences that delve into the messy lives of real people. Yet both have shown at Maurizio Cattelan's Wrong Gallery, in New York, been celebrated at the Istanbul Biennial, and received the prestigious Paul Hamlyn Award. And, in the contest for the Turner Prize, Collins and Abts were the favorites of two of London's most influential art critics, the *Guardian's* Adrian Searle and the *Daily Telegraph's* Richard Dorment.

Rebecca Warren, however, was the bookies' favorite. The bookmaker William Hill is the market leader in bets on cultural events, but, according to the firm's spokesman, Rupert Adams, calculating the Turner Prize odds doesn't require art-world expertise. "We Google the artists, and whoever is the best known often comes up high," he said. "It suggests pedigree. Like with a horse. This year, we felt it was time for a painter—that's art to the layman—so our odds at the time of the nomination had Abts as the six-to-four favorite, but Warren has since pulled into the lead because of where people are putting their money." With a total stake of about forty thousand pounds, the Turner is a small market that is often swayed by what Adams called "friends-and-family betting."

The artist Keith Tyson had a gambling habit when he was a nominee, in 2002. "The Turner Prize was my first opportunity to bet where I could have an effect," he said. "My odds were seven to two. In a four-horse race, that is an insult. I'm sure it's solely because of the bets I put on myself that I went from being the underdog to the favorite. I won't say how much I took home, but I won more from betting than I did from winning the prize."

One day in early November, Mark Titchner, who was then ranked third in the bookies' standings (odds: three to one), was speaking to fifty or so visitors in his room at the Tate. A bashful hippie type with a rock-star sheen, Titchner already had groupies—intense young women with nose rings and cleavage on display. At thirty-three, he was the youngest of the nominees; the Acoustiguide that accompanied his exhibition featured commentary from the lead singer of a "grindcore" band called Napalm Death. Titchner's room seemed to be intentionally overloaded: a kinetic black-and-white sculpture spun to psychedelic effect; television monitors flashed Rorschach inkblots; and a billboard read, "Tiny Masters of the World Come Out."

Slouching, with his hands stuffed in the pockets of his jeans, Titchner ex-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plained the spinning sculpture, which is called "Ergo Ergot": "Ergo refers to René Descartes's famous statement, 'Cogito Ergo Sum.' Ergot is a fungus with hallucinogenic properties that was synthesized to make LSD." He then asked, "What does it mean for a work of art to succeed in this context? People like it? It's bought for a lot of money? Critics like it?" He stopped short of mentioning the Turner Prize judges.

After the crowd had dispersed, Titchner lingered in his room. Like the other nominees, he told me that the prize process made him uneasy. "It's cool to have qualified," he said. "But I think you could get obsessed and spend all day Googling yourself."

Over the years, rumors have circulated that Nick Serota sometimes manipulates the final verdicts of the Turner judges. When I mentioned this, he said, "In the lull before the event—I won't say storm—I begin to consider how I might put a bit of emphasis here or there to get a good conversation going." He went on, "Sometimes, when there is a deadlock, I have had to lean, because, in those circumstances, I don't think we should settle on everyone's third choice."

In the most recent competition, the judges included a journalist and three curators. Lynn Barber, a columnist for the *Observer*, was the only art-world outsider. In October, two days before the exhibition opened, she helped fuel the image of the Turner Prize as a media circus by publishing a piece about her experiences as a judge titled "How I Suffered for Art's Sake." "I hate to say it," she wrote, "but my year as a Turner juror has seriously dampened, though I hope not extinguished, my enthusiasm for contemporary art." She complained that all but one of her artist picks (believed to be Rebecca Warren) were so "brutally rejected" by the other judges that she wondered whether she had been chosen merely as a "fig leaf" to cover the machinations of the art world. (The day after Barber's column appeared, the bookies recalibrated the odds on the nominees: Warren took the lead.)

The Tate's officials were privately furious. "Lynn's article will make it more difficult for the jury to work together," Serota said. "In the past, people have been able to speak their minds feeling pretty confident that what they say will not be written down and used in evidence against them." The other judges were dismayed as well. One of them, Andrew Renton, who runs the curating program at Goldsmiths, University of London, and also manages a private contemporary-art collection called Cranford, told me, "I fear that she has shot her load. She has sidelined herself as a judge by going public before we've finished the process." (The other two judges run public art spaces: Margot Heller, the director of the South London Gallery; and Matthew Higgs, the director of White Columns, the oldest artist-led exhibition space in New York.) Renton also said that Barber's inexperience had led her to put forth nominations that were "beyond premature." "To give the Turner nomination to someone straight out of art school would be utterly irresponsible," he said. The Turner honors artists who are between what the art world would call "late emergent" and "early mid-career." Renton added, "It's also imperative that it not become a midlife-crisis prize."

Renton hadn't made up his mind who should win. "The greatest critical work, in my mind, is the Talmud," he said. "It's one argument superseding another, an ongoing, open-ended dialogue that allows multiple points of view. For me, that's what art is about."

With a week to go before the awards ceremony, Phil Collins hosted a "press conference" at a shabby gilt-and-mirrors hall in Piccadilly. As part of his piece "return of the real," he invited a panel of nine people who had appeared on reality shows to tell their stories to an audience of journalists, including Lynn Barber. One young man spoke about how humiliated he was when he went to Ibiza as part of a reality-TV competition to see who could date Miriam, only to learn that Miriam was a pre-op transsexual.

Barber heckled from the audience, "What did you *think* you were doing?" Collins, undaunted by her power over his fate, told her to shut up.

After the panelists had spoken, Collins walked around the room with a microphone. "Nicholas!" he barked, nodding at Nicholas Glass, from Channel 4 news. Glass asked the group how they felt about being part of an art work.

"I like to make an exhibition of myself," answered a woman who had suffered through medical complications on "Brand New You," a cosmetic-surgery show.

"Art is like having a conversation. This work is very interactive," said a man who had been blamed for his autistic son's bad behavior on "Teen Tamer."

"It's what the Turner Prize is all about," the man who had tried to date Miriam said.

A TV reporter from Germany had a question for Collins.

"Is this project really art?" she asked.

Collins stared into her camera and said, "If this work isn't art, then I have to ask you, is this news?"

The cameraman swung his head out from behind his equipment. "We can't use that!" he exclaimed.

The day after the press conference, Collins pulled into third place ahead of Mark Titchner in the standings.

Three days later, on the Saturday before the awards ceremony, Channel 4 broadcast "The Turner Prize Challenge," a half-hour reality program, produced by the Tate, in which four contestants—two students, an accountant, and an art teacher—competed against one another to explain the work of the four nominated artists to the general public. (The contestants had been winnowed from several hundred "screen tests"—videotaped comments that visitors had made in the "Turner Prize Video Booth" at the Tate.) On the program, one of the contestants explained that, in the course of her "journey," she had learned that art should not be just "pleasing to the eye" but, rather, something that should "rip open my mind-set." The winner was Miriam Lloyd Evans, a full-lipped art-history student. She clinched it by calling Phil Collins's reality-TV-victim hotline to ask if he wanted to hear about her experience making "The Turner Prize Challenge."

At nine-thirty on the morning of December 4th, Serota and his four judges met at the Turner Prize exhibition to take a last look at the work of the four artists. At ten, they went upstairs to

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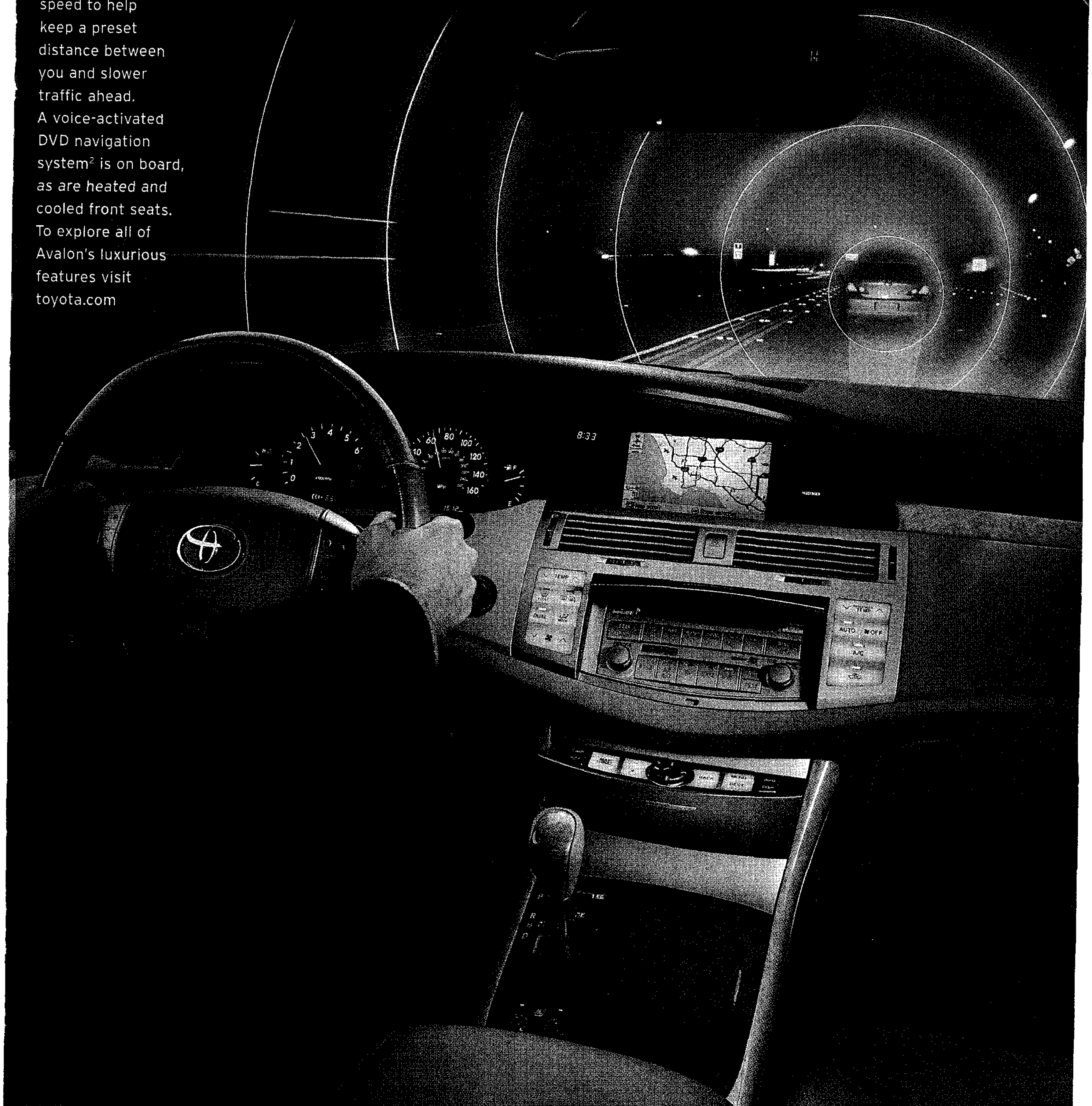

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TOYOTA
moving forward

the vaulted boardroom used for trustee meetings. Four white tables were arranged to form a large square, evenly surrounded by sixteen chairs. Serota had one side to himself. Across from him sat the three art-world judges—Renton, Heller, and Higgs. Sitting in isolation on the left was Lynn Barber. Serota and Renton exchanged glances, and Renton stood up and moved to the chair next to Barber's. Barber took this gesture as an opportunity to apologize for her indiscretion, and she promised not to write about the final deliberations. Then the conversation began.

Early in the meeting, three of the four judges came out in favor of the same two artists. Pros and cons accumulated, and there was much talk of relevance and timing. If Serota had a favorite, no one could tell who it was. After three hours, they thought they'd agreed on a winner and adjourned to mull their decision over lunch. Then they were back in the boardroom, confirming their verdict and discussing what should go in the press release. By 2 P.M., their job was done.

At 5:30 P.M., a little more than an hour before the awards ceremony was due to begin, the museum's blockbuster Old Master show, "Holbein in England," was still heaving with visitors. Upstairs, the Duveen galleries had been transformed into what looked like a night club, with purple lights and black leather couches. At the far end stood a chrome podium, near where the Channel 4 news crew was doing a sound check.

Outside, on the front steps of the museum, a handful of protesters known as the Stuckists, a group dedicated to promoting figurative art, marched around with placards. (Some of them quoted Lynn Barber's newspaper piece: "Is It All a Fix?") At 6:45, the doors opened and a crowd of guests—artists and art-world dignitaries—flowed into the party, where waiters stood with trays of cocktails provided by Gordon's Gin, the prize's sponsor.

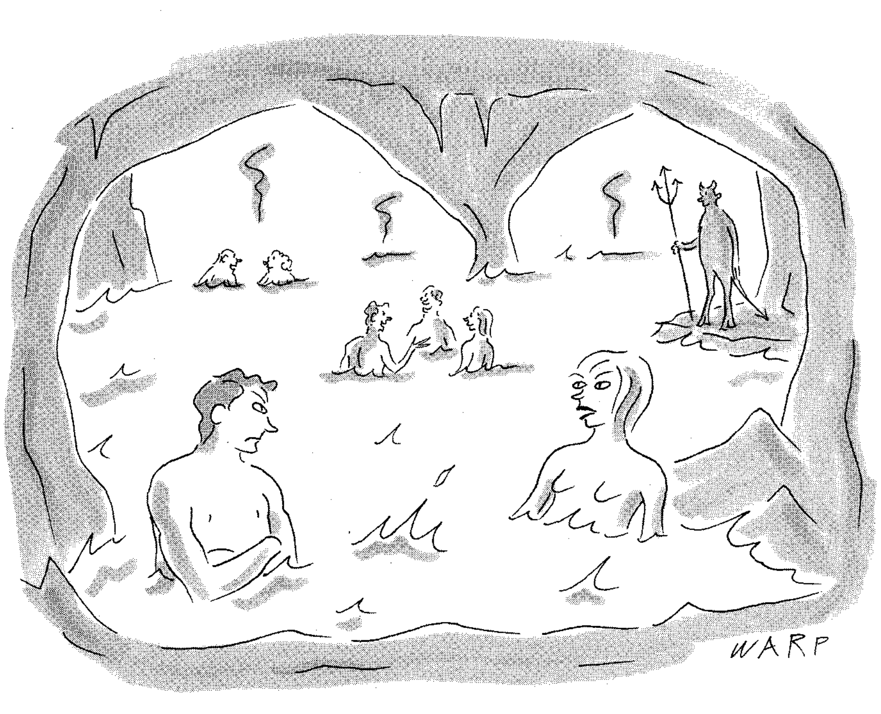
By 7:30, the year's nominees were corralled into an alcove to the left of the podium, like finalists for homecoming queen. Serota moved among them, saying, "I know how difficult this is. I hope it's been a good experience notwithstanding all the pressure." Phil Collins had cleaned himself up and was a model of nonchalance. Rebecca Warren looked by turns giddy and grave in a black dress and gray heels. Mark Titchner was poker-faced in a blue jacket, his tremulous girlfriend gazing up at him. Sitting on a bench was Tomma Abts, looking morose in a grayish inside-out dress. She was hunched over, head in hands.

Serota, handsome in a dark suit and a silver tie, slipped in and out of conversation clusters as he made his way to the podium. He delivered a sixty-second speech about "questioning contemporary values" and introduced the award's presenter, Yoko Ono, describing her as an "artist of international repute." Ono, wearing a top hat and Lennon sunglasses, slowly mounted the steps. She said, "In 1966, I was in New York, received an invite from London, and made a journey across the water. It changed my life forever." She read the words ardently, as if she were reciting a poem. "Artists' power *can* affect the world. I am happy to open the gate of acceptance by the institution of art to another young artist. And the 2006 Turner Prize goes to . . ." She fumbled with the envelope. "Tomma Abts."

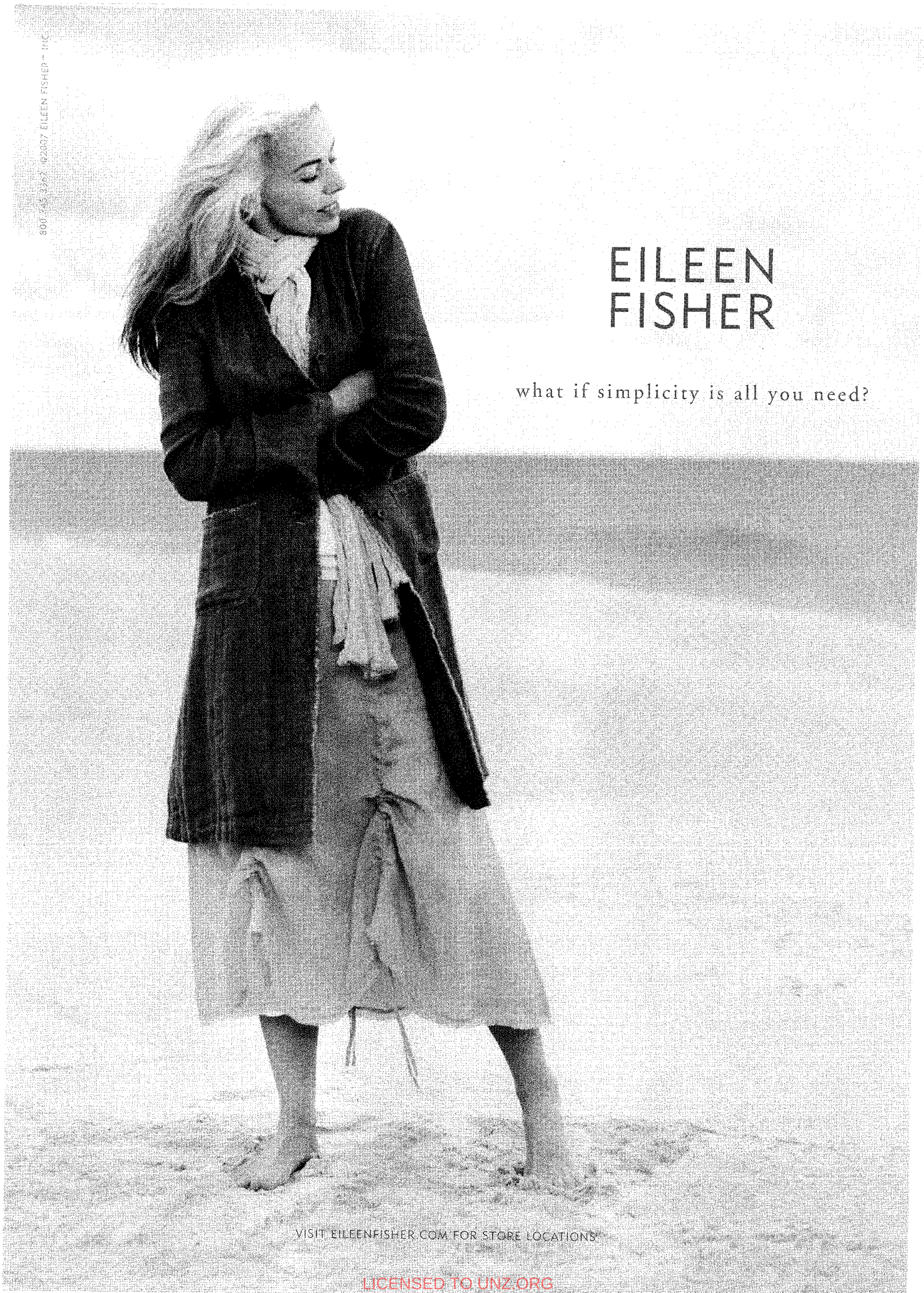
Abts ascended the stage, kissed Ono, and delivered a short unprepared speech. As she was swept into her room of paintings, cameras flashed and paparazzi hollered, "Tomma, over here!," "This way, darlin'!," and "Could we have happier?" Facing the press pack, Abts deflected questions so expertly that a reporter from the *Daily Telegraph* remarked, "She should get a job in the Foreign Office."

An hour later, the crowd in the Duveen galleries had thinned out, and people were trading gossip. Someone said that all the sculpture in Rebecca Warren's room had sold for half a million dollars, or maybe it was pounds. (A Turner Prize nomination is often said to increase an artist's prices by a third, and a win doubles them.) Phil Collins would soon be on a plane to Indonesia to research another video, but upcoming solo shows at the Carnegie Museum, in Pittsburgh, and the Dallas Museum of Art would have him flying west again soon enough. Both he and Warren had slipped off to their separate after-parties.

Mark Titchner was still around, leaning against the bar surrounded by friends. He was already scheduled for group shows at the Moscow and Venice Biennials. As he knocked back a bottle of Grolsch, he said that he'd had better evenings elsewhere. "It was like being dumped by your girlfriend in public, then asked to be 'just friends,'" he said. "Just because you know it's coming doesn't make it any less weird." ♦



"You're never going to be happy if your only definition of success is Heaven."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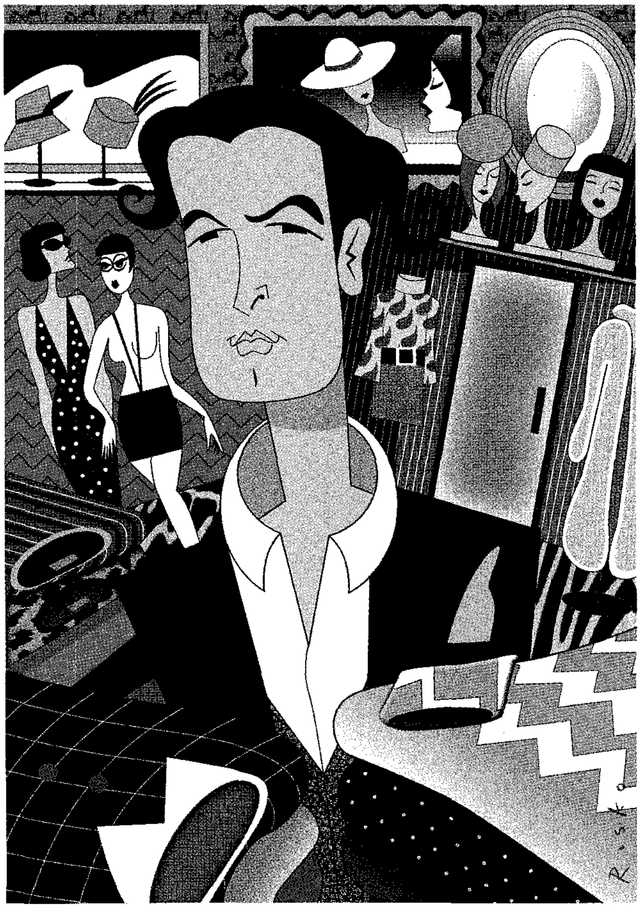
ANNALS OF RETAIL

THIS OLD THING?

How Hollywood went secondhand.

BY DANA GOODYEAR

Ten years ago, Cameron Silver, a former Weimar-style cabaret singer, opened a fancy vintage shop on Melrose Avenue, in Los Angeles. He was twenty-six, and he called the shop Decades. A few years later, Decades moved to a new space, above the old, and Silver and a partner, Christos Garkinos, now run a contemporary consignment shop, Decadestwo, on the lower level. On a recent good day, Silver sold a piece to Gwen Stefani, a dress to someone who lives in London and Los Angeles, and a fur vest to Sandy Hill, in Los Olivos, and he sent a Birkin and three Chanel purses "on approval" to clients in New York. In the days immediately before that, he sold an Ossie Clark maternity dress to Julia Roberts, a short white Thierry Mugler dress to Chloe Sevigny for the *Vanity Fair* Oscar party, and a mocha chiffon Carven dress to Jada Pinkett Smith.



Cameron Silver helped make vintage a red-carpet standard.

ROBERT RISKO

Decades is behind a frosted-glass door at the top of a short, steep flight of stairs carpeted in leopard print. There is a zebra skin on the floor, a wall of Hermès, Chanel, and Judith Leiber bags, and a mannequin usually clothed in vintage Azzaro (a small French fashion house where Silver consults), Yves Saint Laurent, or Jean Dessès. A vitrine of paste-and-glass jewelry sits beneath large windows that face the street, and around a corner is a row of Oscar gowns arranged by color from red to pink and purple, blue, green, and gray; a wall of black; and, in the farthest recess of the store, racks of bohemian English designers, a Pucci ghetto, and one or two pieces that date back to the nineteen-tens. "Vintage" has a shifty definition, and Silver will sell things from even the nineteen-nineties if he deems them collectible. (Nineties Versace, for example, counts, so long as it was made before Gianni was murdered.) The guiding principle is not history so much as what might look "directional"—relevant to runway fashion today.

"We cover a hundred years of fashion, but there is a Decades look," Silver says. "It is about vintage that looks modern, sexy, unstudied, and glamorous. It's the democratization of the red carpet. I had a client buy two Y.S.L. haute-couture dresses for thirty-eight hundred dollars. You can't go into Y.S.L. and buy a skirt that's ready-to-wear for that. You can barely buy a blouse that's evening."

Since Decades opened, and partly owing to Silver's efforts, vintage has become standard attire for celebrities. In 2001, a watershed year, both Renée Zellweger and Julia Roberts dressed in vintage for the Oscars (Zellweger wore a yellow 1959 Jean Dessès from Silver's biggest competitor, Rita Watnick, of LILY et Cie, in Beverly Hills; Roberts wore Valentino from the company archives). That spring, Nicole Kidman wore clingy white vintage Azzaro, from Decades, to the New York première of "Moulin Rouge" and the next day made the cover of *Women's Wear Daily*. Vintage has become so important to Hollywood that this year eBay's style director, Constance White, added vintage to the selection of clothes she bought from the Web site and made available to celebrities during Oscar week. "It's a compliment," Silver said. "But I would never buy on eBay. I don't want people to come in and be able to pinpoint where I got something. The mystery is gone."

Silver has the soul of a popularizer, and the affect of an aesthete. He is tall, with side-parted dark hair slicked back on one side and set to a tumbling curl on the other, and a mode of dress that recalls a vaguely sinister mogul of old: black crocodile vest, slim gray tweed suit, monogrammed shirt, Codognato skull ring. Until recently, he wore his hair chin-length and pin-straight; before that, he had an Afro. Liz Goldwyn, a close friend and a wearer of vintage down to her undergarments, says, "He's gotten more dandyish—sometimes when just my husband and I are at his house for dinner he'll get completely turned out, and then disappear and come back carrying a humongous burgundy crocodile Hermès bag. He's got this great character that he's doing. It's an extension of him, but it's a character."

Silver is deeply, unpretentiously polite, with an air of mischief that makes it seem as if he were always slightly struggling to stay on best behavior. His is the kind of irony that preserves deniability. Blair Sabol—a former fashion writer who sold

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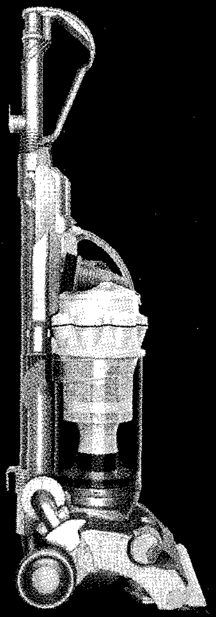

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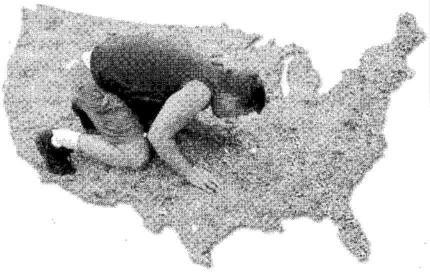

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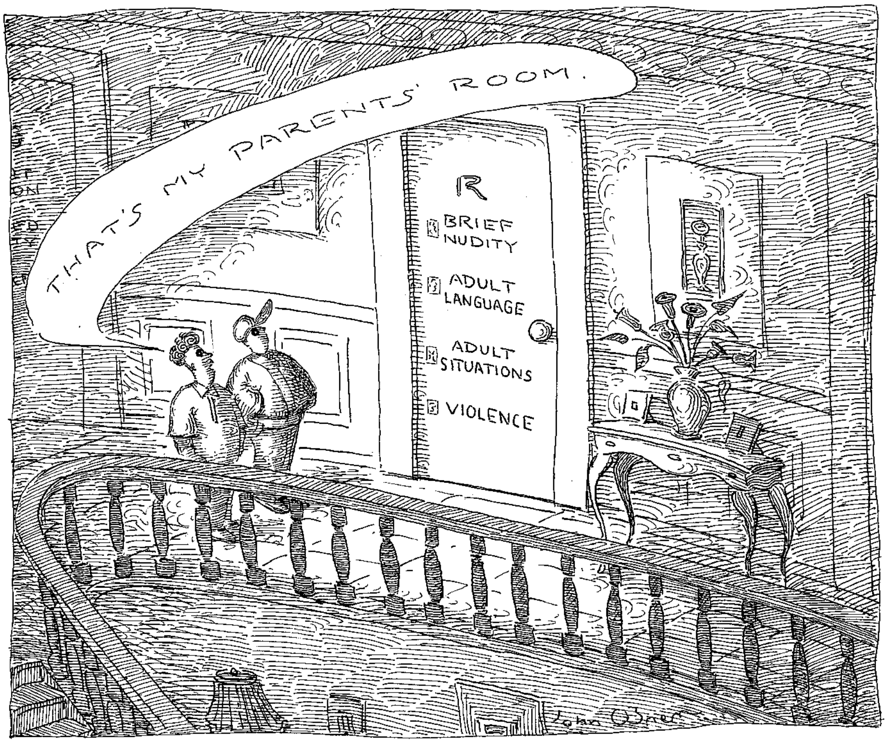


him her Zandra Rhodes, Stephen Burrows, and Rudi Gernreich—says she can’t get him to badmouth anyone. “Ah, but she’s such a sweet spirit,” he will say of the most notorious boor. Circumspection is important in his line of work. He is often among the first to know who is pregnant, feuding, or turning Scientologist—one stylist in particular does heavy business with the Church. (Sometimes women anticipating divorce bring clothes to Decadestwo, a way of discreetly converting assets to cash.) Silver has learned to keep a poker face.

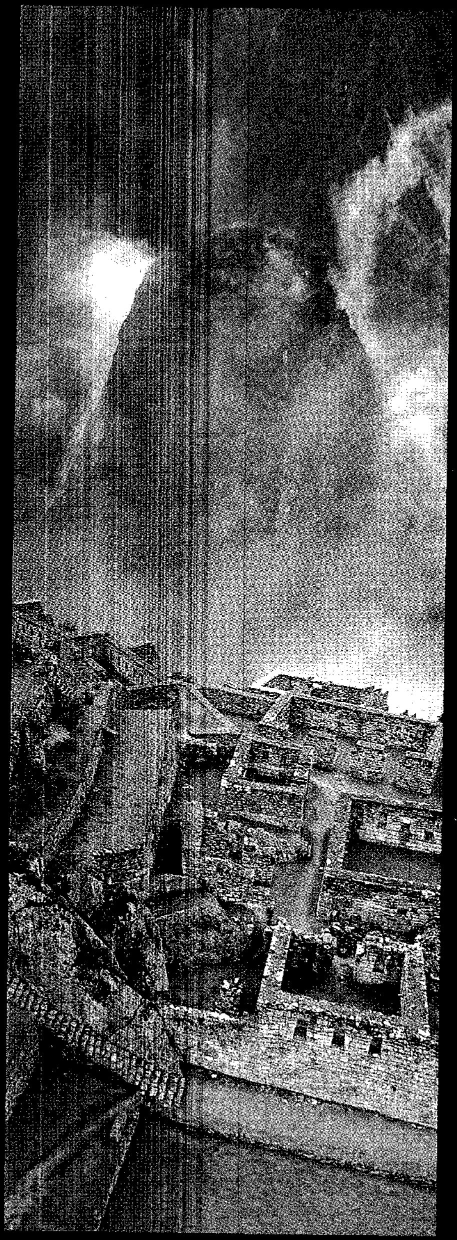
A week before the Golden Globes, Silver was setting aside gowns for Salma Hayek, whose stylist, Rachel Zoe—a Hollywood fixture who works with Lindsay Lohan, Mischa Barton, and Keira Knightley, among others, and is known for her seventies-inspired jersey-dress-and-gold-bangle look—was sending an assistant to pick them up. (Silver, playfully talking shop with Zoe’s office: “I’ve got some real cheap dresses for her that she can afford. I’ve got lots in the eighteen-hundred-to-four-thousand range.”) There was one small complication: Nicole Richie had sent her personal assistant and her new stylist’s assistant to Decades to resell some unwanted clothes. Last fall, Richie and Zoe, who outfitted Richie during her transformation from voluptuous party girl in getups from the West Hollywood shop Kitson to skeletal party girl in vintage Hervé Léger, had a nasty falling out, which resulted in Richie’s posting a “blind item” on her MySpace page about a “35-year-old raisin face,” which was widely assumed to be a reference to Zoe. Everyone was scheduled to arrive at the same time. “I’m like Norway,” Silver said, calm in the face of a diplomatic crisis.

Richie’s helpers arrived first, hauling a dozen garbage and garment bags of castoffs. Several employees from the store downstairs appeared—most of the clothes were contemporary—and, with Jarred Cairns, who has worked for Silver for eight years, they started emptying the bags onto the zebra rug: dozens of pairs of tiny little jeans, nighties, shrugs, shirts with the tags still on. Silver held up a pair of jeans and said, sardonically, “I hear skinny jeans are really in.”

The buzzer rang, and Silver and Cairns exchanged a furtive look as Zoe’s assistant spilled into the room, laughing loudly. Her cell phone rang, and she jabbered into it, in a display of nonchalance (“Shut up I’ll call you back I love you goodbye”), as she dashed around, looking at gowns. With the changing-room door open, she undressed and tried on

A WINDOW TO PERU

Machu Picchu



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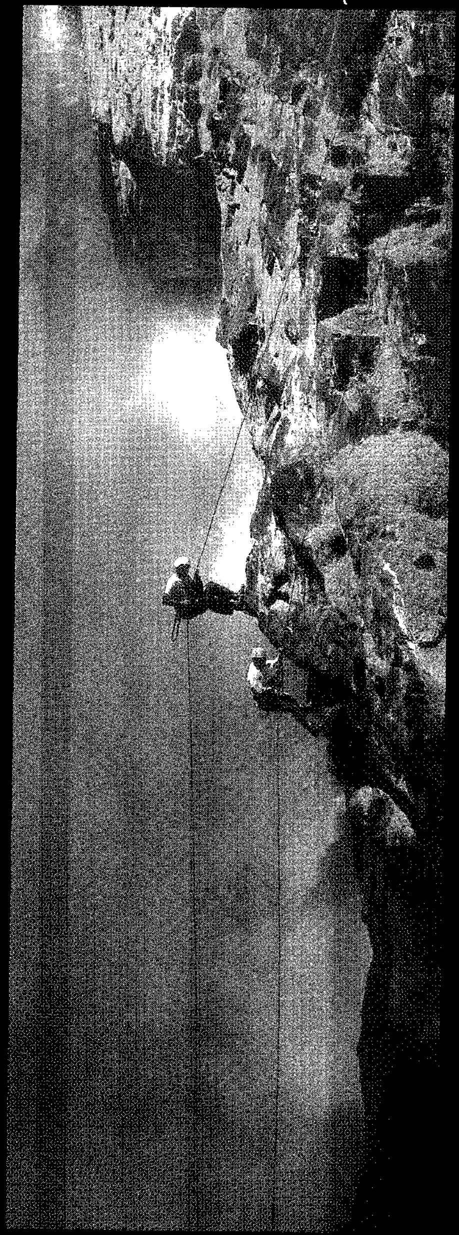

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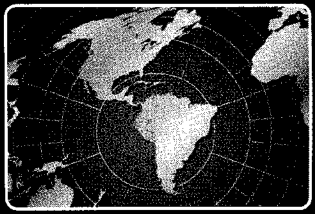

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something for herself. “Where are you going to wear that?” Silver asked chidingly, as she put on a mustard-colored burnt-velvet bell-shaped minidress. “To the movies!” she said. Richie’s assistant, studiously, loyally BlackBerrying on the couch, refused to acknowledge the enemy presence.

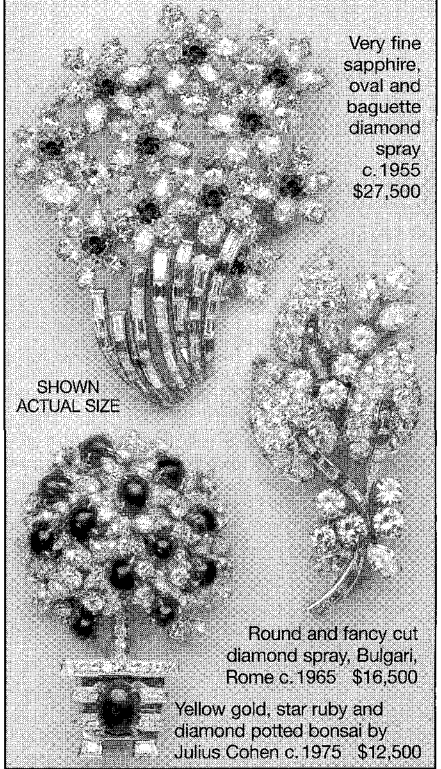
Meanwhile, the shop employees sorted silently through Richie’s clothes. Silver took a few vintage pieces to sell on consignment—“It’s not going to fit anyone, so I don’t want to hold on to much of it,” he said. Six bags went to Decadestwo, and Richie’s helpers carted away the rest to donate to a charity thrift store. After they left, Cairns said, “I thought there was going to be a little catfight there.”

Silver grew up in a house with seven bathrooms in the flats of Beverly Hills. He was a doted-upon only child, but for a year had five or six siblings from a family of Laotian boat people that his parents, committed humanitarians, took in. (His father, Jack, is a lawyer; Margot, his mother, gave up a job with an advertising firm when she had Cameron.) He entertained his grandmother’s friends, at lunch parties, and his parents, when they took him overseas. In Madrid, the Silvers stayed in a hotel suite with two phone lines. After Jack walked through the lobby without a jacket, the phone rang and a Spanish-sounding voice said that the hotel manager needed to have a word with him about his improperly casual attire. Jack went down to the lobby only to find that the manager hadn’t called: it was Cameron, playing a prank from the other room. (He still regularly fools his parents, friends, and the people at Decadestwo, calling in a high squeaky voice, or pretending to be a charlatan with a hot stock tip.) Silver’s tendency to accumulate and divest manifested itself early. Margot says that she could never leave Saks without buying him a Polo shirt, and that once she came down to the kitchen and saw him with a stack of Polos two feet high. He was giving them to the housekeeper.

At thirteen, Cameron had a bar mitzvah, and his parents hosted a reception at the Beverly Hills Hotel. In contrast to the bat mitzvah of a classmate who made her party entrance on a white stallion, the distinguishing excess of Cameron’s bar mitzvah was that Margot managed to get both rabbis from the synagogue. He named the event “The Cameron Awards” and, wearing a tuxedo, top hat, and white gloves, performed “New York, New York,” “Easy Street,” and “You’re Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile” for his guests, before giving out Oscars.

After studying Theatre Arts at U.C.L.A., Silver travelled around the country, singing in theatres for audiences of several hundred. In L.A., he drove a Land Rover with the vanity plate “CROONR.” When, in Seattle, he found an apple-green coat by Pauline Trigère and a trove of fifties Dior couture, he started buying vintage clothes and sending them home to his mother to store. He lived in a guesthouse at his parents’ place until he was thirty, when he bought the house he now shares with his boyfriend of nine years, a handsome commercial actor named Jeff Snyder. The house, in Los Feliz, was built by Rudolf Schindler for his insurance agent, in 1930, and after Silver and Snyder completed a painstaking restoration (for which they won an award from the L.A. Conservancy) they had it landmarked.

In 1996, Silver released “Berlin to Babylon,” a recording of the songs of Kurt Weill and Friedrich Hollaender. Writing in the album’s liner notes, he explained that he was drawn to the themes of “alienation, yearning, irony, humor, and unresolved sentimentality.” The year after the album came out, Silver stopped singing and opened Decades, but, by his own account, he has never stopped performing. The actress Marisa Tomei, who has several times bought awards-show gowns or after-party dresses from Decades just hours before an event, told me that Silver’s past in show business makes the act of buying something from him feel more creative than ordinary shopping. “He’s got a vaudevillian heart inside there, and I connect with that,” she said. “I’ve known him through different stages and phases of my career, starting with ‘What am I supposed to wear to a fancy party?’ He helped me in a Maurice Chevalier-in-‘Gigi’ kind of way.” There



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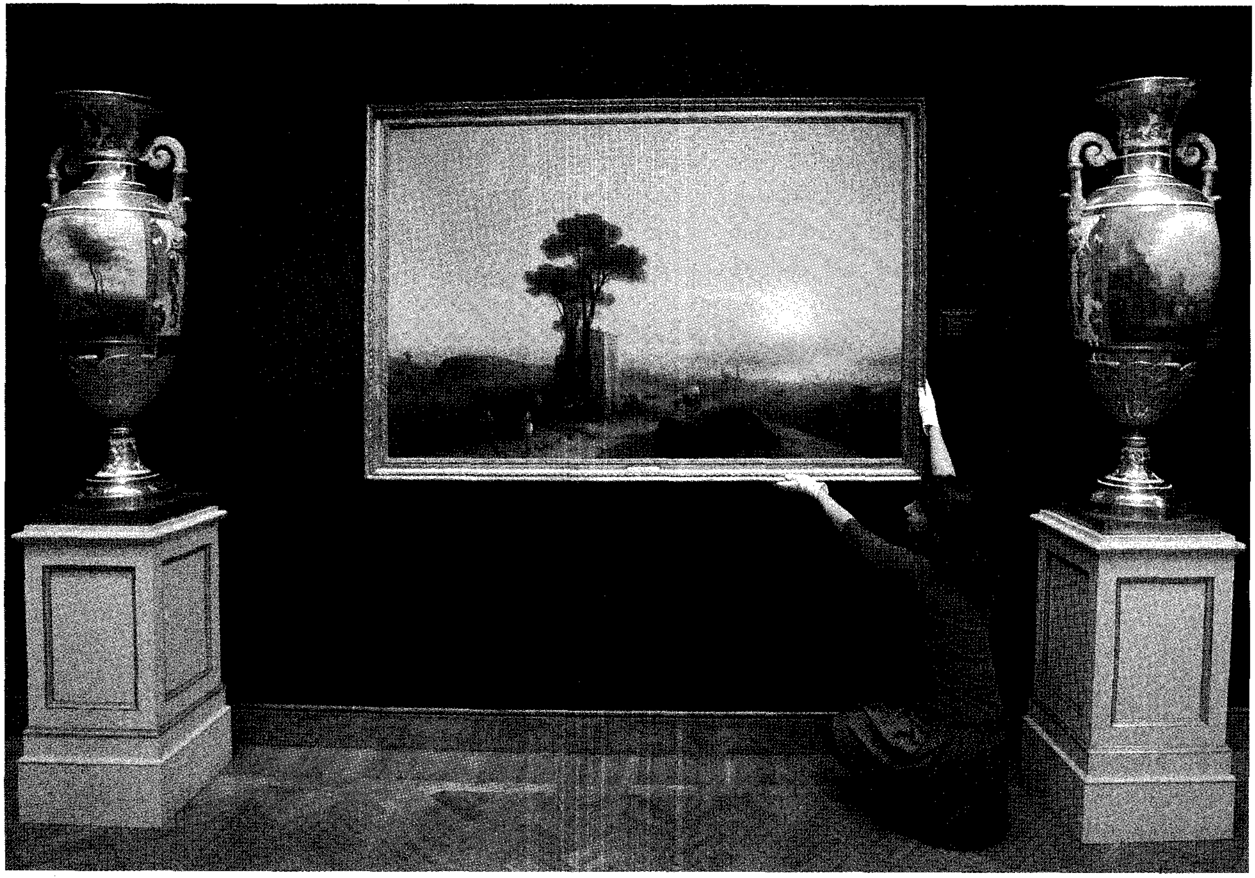
Silver makes friends easily. Early in his career, he had a party and asked Peggy Moffitt, Rudi Gernreich's model and muse, whom he had never met, to be the guest of honor. Shortly after that, Moffitt and her husband, the photographer William Claxton, were going to Milan for a show of Claxton's pictures of Moffitt wearing Gernreich. Silver lent Moffitt a Gernreich for the opening party, given by Karl Lagerfeld, and she invited him along. "We had great fun, and he made a lot of contacts, which was very good for him," Moffitt says. "I think he's the most socially adept person I've ever met, and I've met loads and loads of people in a very long life." When Tiffany Dubin, the stepdaughter of A. Alfred Taubman, who was then the chairman of Sotheby's, started a couture program at the auction house, Silver was extremely supportive: at the first sale, in 1997, as more established dealers snobbishly refused to bid, he bought a pair of 50-inch-waist Gucci leather pants that Taubman himself had put up for sale, with the thought that he would have them altered to his own size.

Sally Singer, an editor at *Vogue*, believes that Silver has a stylist's eye. "He likes to take a designer who's undervalued in the vintage world," she said. "No one was looking at vintage Azzaro before Cameron appeared with a trough of it he got from God-knows-which old lady who was slinky once. He thought, Slink, Hollywood, we can do this—and then it starts moving. Eight to ten years ago, vintage was about looking at the right pedigree, the labels, things that hadn't been altered. We love those collectors—they help preserve the history of fashion. But Cameron is about where is fashion moving and how can we move with it."

Last year, for example, Silver began to sense that the world was experiencing a "Lacroix moment." At Doyle, the New York auction house, which until recently held eclectic couture sales, he tried to buy a couple of Christian Lacroix pieces that were said to have belonged to Bette Midler but was outbid. The Lacroix moment took on definite contours when his client Becca Cason Thrash let him know that he was expected at a high-black-tie party in Houston, at the end of February, where, to benefit the American Friends of the Louvre, the latest Lacroix couture show would be reënacted on a runway built down the middle of her indoor swimming pool. "All the ladies are calling about Lacroix to wear to Becca's party," he said, several weeks before the event. He had none in stock, and began to search for Lacroix and other suitably grand dresses. "I have good business in Texas," he said later. "I will see people I'm really fond of. I don't make these trips intentionally to build the business, but I'm sure it has real value in that regard. It's like being a politician when you're a retailer."

A rule of thumb in vintage is that you will find a cache in the place you least expect. Keni Valenti, who sells vintage clothes in Miami and New York, told me, "The weirdest place I ever found something was at a Salvation Army in a really poor neighborhood where the Arch is—what town is that? St. Louis. I found a couture Lanvin dress and a couture Dior dress, for two or three dollars each." Mark Walsh, a high-end dealer—he sells mostly to museums and to collectors who don't alter, wear, or even touch the clothes with ungloved hands, and says that he has more twenties and thirties Chanel than the Chanel archive—told me that he once put off for a year a woman who called him about some antique linens and lace she had found in a trunk in the house of her aunt, who had died. He has allergies, and she had mentioned that her aunt had cats. She kept calling. "Finally, I fortified myself," he said. "I bought a respirator at Home Depot." In the attic of the house—a Westchester Tudor decorated by Dorothy Draper in the forties and, by the time Walsh got there, populated by a couple of hundred cats—he found more Vuitton trunks than he had ever seen. In them was a pristine collection of couture, dating from 1905 to 1925; some of the clothes will be on display this spring at the Metropolitan Museum, in a show devoted to Poiret.

Once, Silver got a tip from a friend of a friend (a former stylist for the Dixie Chicks) that a private collection of three thousand pieces of designer clothing and haute couture was being sold in an estate sale in Spokane. He flew there and

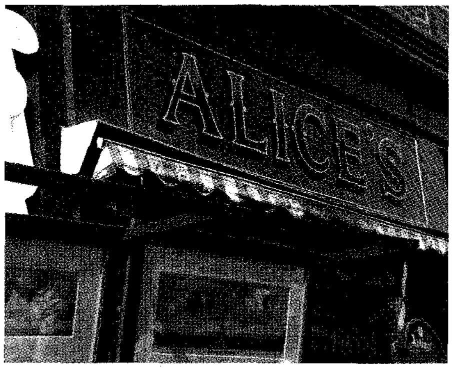


TOP PHOTO: © LINDSAY PARNABY/EPA/CORBIS; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF VISIT LONDON

A TREASURED CITY

LONDON'S WINDING STREETS, AUCTION HOUSES, AND COVERED MARKETS ARE FILLED WITH A VARIETY OF ART, ANTIQUES, AND COLLECTIBLES

For connoisseurs and collectors the world over, London is unparalleled. It's home to the great auction houses, some in operation since the eighteenth century, as well as one of the world's largest street markets, on Portobello Road. Throughout London are winding and picturesque streets that are lined with tiny shops almost entirely devoted to antiques. Street markets also pop up all across London, some containing thousands of antique items. As if this were not enough, the city is also renowned for its antique fairs. Glance at the names of the many dealers on Portobello Road to get a sense of the area's fascinating variety. Offered here are barometers, jelly molds, Roman coins, chess sets, clocks, teddy bears, textiles, and tins, all ranging in price from a few pence to several thousand pounds. Best of all, these markets and fairs are entertaining even for those not interested in buying. Held in the shadows of London's pastel-painted Victorian houses, they give everyone the chance to touch and feel items from Britain's past and to get a greater sense of the nation's heritage and history. ▶



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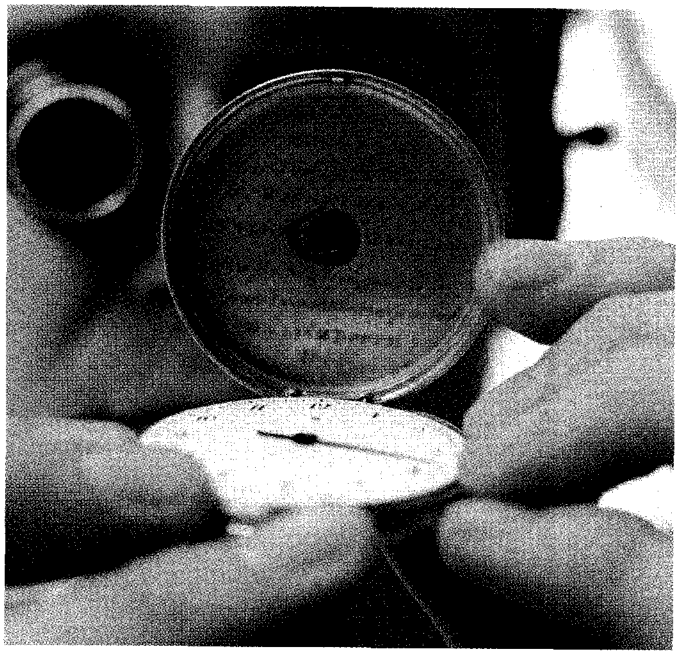
The Thrill of the Live Auction

London's three major auction houses were all founded in the eighteenth century—Sotheby's in 1744, Christie's in 1766, and Bonhams in 1793—and while they've waded into the twenty-first century by offering some online sales, nothing beats the experience and thrill of bidding in person. From June 19th through June 22nd, there will be auctions at **Sotheby's** on New Bond Street, offering Impressionist, modern, and contemporary art. June 5th will be devoted to important English furniture. At its Olympia location on April 19th, there will be an auction of European ceramics, glass, silver, and virtu.

Close by in South Kensington, **Christie's** has a number of auctions worth visiting for their regional appeal. On May 10th, there will be a sale of Irish art with about two hundred pictures by painters such as George Barret and Jack Butler Yeats (brother of William Butler Yeats). A sale on May 25th will include a rare collection of Scottish colorists from the early twentieth century. Between June 5th and June 8th, Christie's will host British Art Week, which includes auction sales, events, and lectures dedicated to the history of British art and furniture. Included among the lots will be works by Gainsborough and Lowry.

Bonhams has more than seven hundred auctions a year in its showrooms around the world. Among its more interesting events coming up are the antique arms and armor sale on April 4th, and another of dolls, teddy bears, and automata (mechanical toys) on May 2nd. Additionally, Bonhams will have a sale of exploration, travel, and topographical pictures on May 23rd.



High Street, High Quality

Commercial galleries abound in the Bond Street area, some with a history as rich as the auction houses. **Agnews**, for example, was founded in 1817 and remains one of the world's leading galleries. There are also three **Richard Green** galleries in Mayfair dealing in traditional paintings from the seventeenth century through the twenty-first century.

For furniture and textile stores, head closer to the river, to Pimlico Road. Among these genteel stores, don't miss **Ross Hamilton** for English, Continental, and Oriental furniture. Or visit **Christopher Hodsoll** for its glorious array of furniture and furnishings.

Of all the antique-rich areas, however, Kensington Church Street best combines the distinctive beauty of the city's architecture with the high quality of its items for sale. Handsome shops line Kensington Church as it curves between Notting Hill and Kensington High Street. Many of these shops sport "By Appointment" signs, but don't let that intimidate you: Go ahead and make that appointment. **Adrian Harrington** is celebrated for its selection of rare antiquarian books, as **Through the Looking Glass** is for nineteenth-century mirrors.

FOR MORE INSPIRATION, GO TO VISITLONDON.COM—LONDON'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE.

Fair Is Fair

The **Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair** has on display items dating from 3000 B.C. to the present. More than twenty thousand people visited this fair last year, some of them to buy, many just to revel in the event's outstanding museum-worthy offerings. *June 14th–20th.*

The **Summer Fine Art & Antiques Fair** at Olympia plays host to nearly three hundred international exhibitors. The works are arranged in architect-designed spaces, with dealers offering everything from furniture to fine art, sculptures, and textiles. *June 7th–17th.*

Park Lane Hotel in Piccadilly and **The Rembrandt**, opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum, both regularly host indoor antique fairs. *Sundays throughout the year.*

Those willing to take a short train ride should be sure to visit the massive fair at **Kempton Park Race Course.** *Second and last Tuesday of each month.*

HIT THE MARKETS

Among the thousand dealers on **Portobello Road**, many of the best have stalls within permanent arcades. **Smith & Robinson Antiques** carries an impressive array of decorative objects and furniture. **Elizabeth Bradwin** carries nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century animal subjects, including Viennese and French bronzes, carved wood, and tobacco jars. Don't miss out on the antique watches at **Kleanthous Antiques**. Its collection includes vintage Rolex, Cartier, and Patek Phillippe watches.

The New Caledonian Market—or, as it's more popularly known, **The Bermondsey Market**—on London Bridge Road is where the serious dealers go to buy. Plenty of the business is done before dawn, but if you want to pick up the antiques before they reach Portobello Road, get in a cab, bring a flashlight, and jostle with the professionals. For a more leisurely pace, the shops of **Camden Passage** are excellent. One can wander the alleyways and walkways any day of the week, but on Wednesdays and Saturdays, dealers set up their tables and Camden Passage transforms itself into one of the city's best markets.

Aisle 3 for Antiques

London's antique "supermarkets" offer shoppers the ability to browse for hours. Many also offer their customers a chance to refortify at an on-premises restaurant. **Alfies Antique Market** is noted for its jewelry, paintings, and ceramics, but it also got a shot of fame after a well-known actress was photographed wearing a vintage dress she'd bought there. *13–25 Church Street, NW8.*

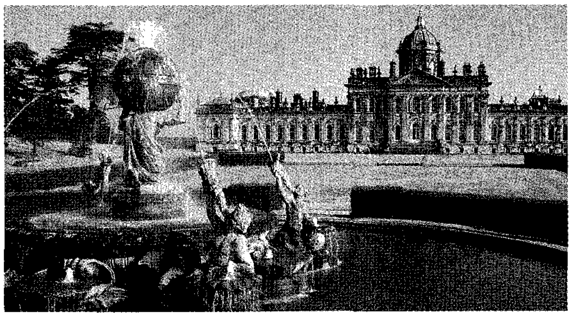
The Old Cinema has more than two thousand pieces, with competitive prices. Notably, it has a good selection of bedroom furniture, dating from early Georgian to Art Nouveau. *160 Chiswick High Road, W4.*

Antiquarius is one of the most fun indoor markets in the city. It may be best known for its Art Deco and Art Nouveau pieces, but with about a hundred dealers selling books and boxes, silver, porcelain, glass, and prints, there is sure to be something here for everyone. *131–141 Kings Road, SW3.*

Britain's Storied Castles and Great Houses

SEE BRITAIN'S TREASURES—SET AMONG GREEN ROLLING HILLS, ANCIENT RUINS, AND GLORIOUS GARDENS

England's rich history manifests itself in its castles and great houses. Northern England is home to many of these treasures, some now in imposing ruins, others still inhabited after hundreds of years. Often these castles welcome visitors, who are now given a chance to step inside magnificent buildings and, in many cases, enjoy spectacular art in situ.



The Ninth Earl of Carlisle decorated several of the Howard family homes with the work of William Morris, the principal founder of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. Until June 3rd, an exhibition at **Castle Howard** will showcase the artist's work, while also illustrating the Howard family's close friendship with Morris. Among other treasures at Castle Howard is a significant collection of sculpture acquired in Italy during the fourth Earl's tour there from 1738.

In recent years, the owners of England's castles and great houses have worked hard to offer a larger variety of activities, from music and theatre to car rallies and jousting. Stately **Ripley Castle**, which has been continuously inhabited for 700 years, plays host to a variety of events, such as a series of cooking classes, with a theme that varies from month to month.

At **Bamburgh Castle** in Northumberland, visitors can join one of England's most important archaeological digs as a volunteer. The dig covers a whole range of periods, including prehistoric barrows and an early Anglican burial ground. **Chillingham Castle** in Northumberland is rare for having opened up a few of its rooms to overnight guests, who will experience what it's like to spend the night in a medieval fortress surrounded by gardens. You can also get married there. Other notable attractions in the north include one of the world's largest collections of owls at Cumbria's World Owl Centre in **Muncaster Castle**, and the chance to eat like a king in the banquet halls at **Auckland Castle** in County Durham.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO VISITBRITAIN.COM/US.

TOP PHOTOS: COURTESY OF VISIT LONDON; *LEFT:* © MARTIN BEDDALL/ALAMY; *RIGHT:* COURTESY OF VISIT BRITAIN

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Fairytale princesses never had it this good. At Yorkshire's Castle Howard, more than memorable 'knights' await. Today, visitors to castles in the north of England can enjoy cooking and art classes, sumptuous meals, even a glorious outdoor summer concert—all against a truly royal backdrop. For more things you never knew you could experience in a castle, as well as the best way to travel to Britain, go to visit**Britain**.com/us

Castle Howard, Yorkshire, England

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ELEGY

The bird on the other side of the valley
sings *cuckoo cuckoo* and he sings back, inside,
knowing what it meant to the Elizabethans.
Hoping she is unfaithful now. Delicate
and beautiful, making love with the Devil
in his muggy bedroom behind the shabby office.
While he is explaining the slums were there
when he got the job. *And* the Buicks burning
by the roads in the dark. He was not the one
doing the judging, he says. Or the one pointing down
at the lakes of burning lead. He is feeding
her lemons. Holding shaved ice in his mouth
and sucking her nipples to help with the heat.

—*Jack Gilbert*

bought what he considered the sixty best items. He has bought in New Hope, Sydney, and at several places (a tailor, a charity shop) in La Jolla that Liz Goldwyn turned him on to. He has been in Joan Collins's closet but didn't find anything for the store. The magic combination of Neiman Marcus, oil money, and closet space has made Texas a gold mine of stashed couture, and Silver has prospected there with success. The morbid aspect of his job seems not to affect him, and he is sentimental only to a point. "I love older people," he said. "That's one of the ways this job works for me. One of the first things I bought was from a woman who had recently lost her husband. She said, 'Cameron, this is the dress I met my husband in.' It was Chantilly lace. Tom Ford bought it three months later."

Several years ago, after stopping by the store when Silver happened to be out of town, Catherine Deneuve invited him to come and see her at home in Paris. She gave him the security code to her apartment, made him an espresso with almond milk, and showed him what she was willing to part with: Chanel accessories (he gave a couture headband to Goldwyn), Y.S.L. jewelry (which all went to one client, who has a four-thousand-piece collection), Hermès luggage (he kept some for himself), and clothes. She smoked skinny cigarettes, and had beautiful accessories. "There were these decorative-arts cigarette boxes," Silver said. "They were so wonderful. All these cigarette boxes that I *wish* she would sell."

Six months ago, he got a phone call from the Bond girl Jill St. John. "I went to the house and met her and R.J."—her husband, the actor Robert Wagner. "Unfortunately, she's not ready to get rid of her Alaïa yet. When I was buying, she said, 'I've sold my jewelry already—*that* was fun, since I got it all for free.' I still haven't sold the best piece: a James Galanos beaded gown. She wore it on the cover of *People* in 1982." In the fall, he took a number of pieces to Hong Kong, to a trunk show at Lane Crawford, a department store. Sarah Rutson, the fashion director, had flown him over to educate her Chinese clients about vintage, and remove the stigma and the superstition associated in Chinese culture with wearing someone else's clothes. "Fashion is about storytelling, and Cameron's very good at that," Rutson said. "They loved hearing about Jill St. John and her Bond-girl phase." (They also loved Silver, and many asked to have their picture taken with him.) Recently, Mary J. Blige bought a mink-trimmed Galanos maxicoat that St. John wore to the Oscars in 1969, and wore it in the limo on the way to a party that Jada Pinkett and Will Smith threw for her the Friday before the Grammys. The hostess wore a purple Halston from Decades.

Silver travels constantly—to auctions, fashion events, trunk shows, parties—and thereby puts himself in the same way of luck. Last fall, he went to Flor-

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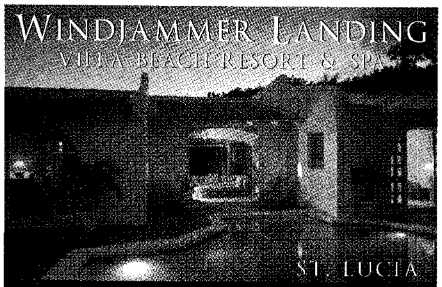

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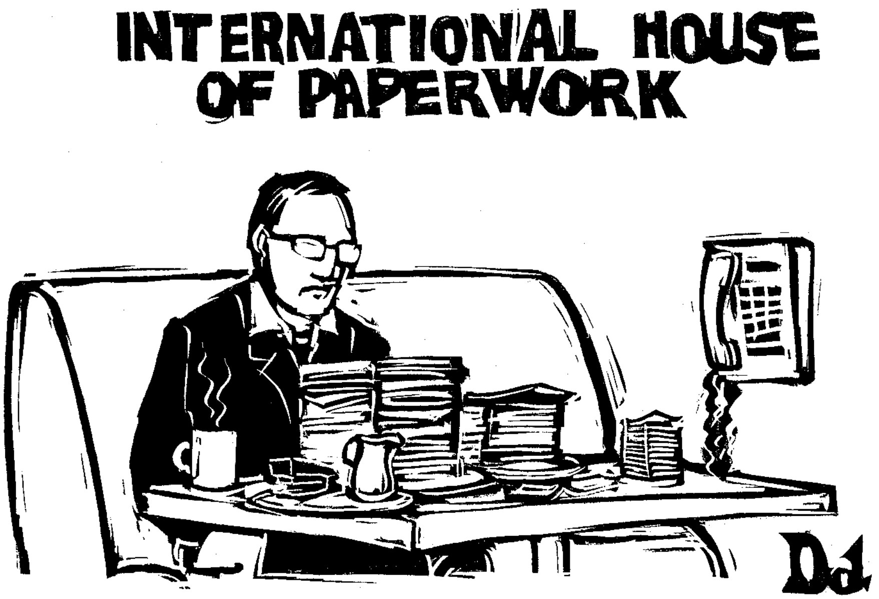
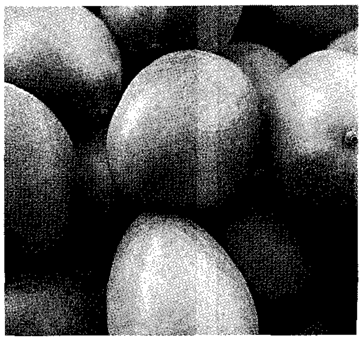
ence for the wedding of a Texan friend and, while he was there, heard from an Italian collector that Irene Galitzine, a Russian princess and designer known for having made Claudia Cardinale's pants suit in "The Pink Panther," had died. He went to her apartment in Rome and trolled through heaps of clothes—runway samples from the seventies and eighties—to pick a few choice pieces (including the mustard-colored minidress). In January, he was in Miami for a vintage-jewelry show, where he bought lots of seventies Kenneth Lane, flamboyant eighties Chanel (Maria Sharapova likes it), and a Cartier belt of misshapen golden disks that looked like something dredged from the Mediterranean. "Jackie O. always wore this style in Capri," he said. Afterward, he flew to Paris for the fashion shows, and bought Chanel bags, dead-stock Mugler, and a very small Christian Lacroix that went to a Hollywood client rather than to a Texas one.

In February, Silver flew to New York to host a party for Lisa Perry, a designer friend, and to scout the vintage show at the Metropolitan Pavilion, in Chelsea. The day before the show, he stopped by the Met to see an exhibition of clothes from Nan Kempner's wardrobe, and hit a couple of local resale stores, looking for Lacroix for Houston. The first was Encore, a grungy consignment store on upper Madison, where Jackie O. used to sell her clothes. "Any Lacroix?" he said, greeting the manager. "I want super-eighties-looking Lacroix. It has to be a dress." The manager said no, but in a few minutes Silver had amassed a group of other things: a brown Bill Blass, a midnight-blue Chanel, a Leiber bag. The manager pointed out a long red-blue-and-yellow striped Balmain. "It belonged to one of the people who ran with Nan," he said, offering it to Silver for a hundred and fifty dollars.

"You know how this would be chic?" Silver said, buying the dress. "Cocktail length."

The following day, at the vintage show, Silver was dressed down, in a black turtleneck, a blazer, and brown wingtips, topped off by a sandy ostrich trench with a fur collar and a gray knit cap. He wandered among booths of Heart and Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirts, trashed Louis Vuitton suitcases, and Bakelite jewelry, asking everyone for sexy, colorful Oscar gowns and, to no avail, over-the-top eighties Lacroix. "You know what'll happen with all these requests?" he said. "The next time I come, there will be all this Lacroix, but I'll be over it." Instead, he bought an emerald-green Bill Blass, a Hanae Mori (after a "Madame Butterfly"-inspired Dior couture show, he thought the "Asiany thing" was coming back), a Thierry Mugler, a Versace top, and a blue Y.S.L., which he sold to Aerin Lauder to wear to an Oscar party. A small steel-gray-haired woman in a mohair coat approached him with a tight smile. "I'm getting ready to start selling," she said quietly. "Are you interested in Beene?"





THE ALOHA SMILE

By John Heckathorn

Like the seventeen-year-old she is, Q'orianka Kilcher speaks in gushes of enthusiasm.

She has much to be enthusiastic about. She was only fourteen when she played Pocahontas to Colin Farrell's John Smith in the 2005 film "The New World." She's scheduled to star in—and produce—"The Power of Few," an urban crime thriller. "This year, 2007, is looking fantastic," she says.

Kilcher is the daughter of a native Peruvian father and a Swiss-American mother (her first name, which is pronounced coree-ahn-ka, means "golden eagle" in the Peruvian language of Quechua). She spent her childhood, from age one and a half to eight and a half, in Hawai'i—going to the beach every day, hiking to remote waterfalls, sailing a small boat along Waikīkī. "I miss it so much," she says. "When I lose my way in Los Angeles city life, I sit myself down and remember how it was in Hawai'i."

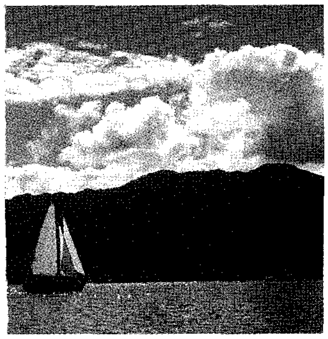
From the age of four, Kilcher learned hula and Tahitian dance. "I'm so glad I learned those first," she says. Every movement in hula is said to have a specific meaning, but "it always has grace and class. I've tried to work it into all the other dance styles I've learned."

The best thing Kilcher learned in the Islands, she says, was attitude. "If you walk on set, hug and kiss everyone, they sometimes go *wha*?—because they're not used to it. But a little aloha makes for a better working environment. It sure beats being mean."

In 1998, to help further Q'orianka's career, the family left Hawai'i for Los Angeles. It wasn't until last year that Kilcher and her family made their first trip back to the Islands. "We'd made a pact, we wouldn't go back until I'd made it in L.A.," she says.

The visit refreshed her bright memories—she hit the beach every day and ate mangos till she had her fill. One day she was in line at a plate-lunch stand, in her bathing suit and wrap, brown from all the sun she'd been getting.

"The people at the stand thought I lived there, that I was from Hawai'i. That made me so, so happy. I had that bright aloha smile."



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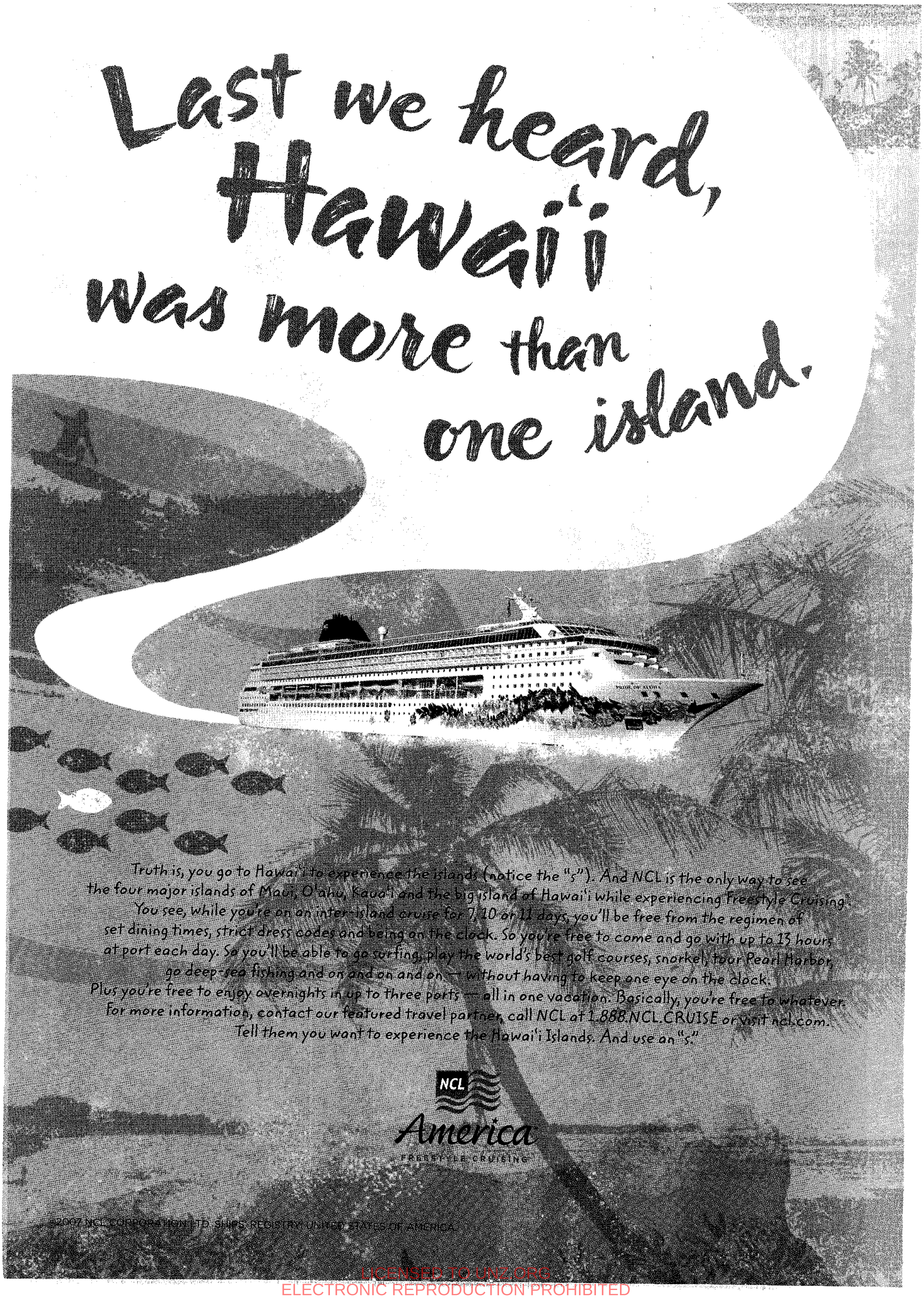

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"Yes and no," Silver replied. "I have a client whose husband is nominated for best actor. She's an actor, too. It has to be *beyond*, and she's a size zero." He was leaving that afternoon for Los Angeles, so they decided that the woman, a fashion-and-film-industry psychiatrist, would FedEx him images. As she walked away, Silver said proudly, "She has probably one of the most important Geoffrey Beene collections in the world. It's a profound collection. She was one of my first clients."

Becca Cason Thrash lives in a twenty-one-thousand-square-foot two-bedroom house near the golf course of the second-best country club in Houston. (The house was recently on the market for thirty-nine million dollars.) The bayou runs through the back yard. Thrash, a spunky woman in her early fifties, who can easily seat three hundred for dinner, had two hundred and fifty to what was to be the first-ever Lacroix couture show in Texas. She had moved a glass wall to accommodate an entrance for the models. Princess Napoleon was coming; so was Charlie Rose. On the night of the party, Thrash, nicknamed Tribecca for her habit of changing her outfit three times a night, was wearing a backless red Halston dress (vintage) and a bejewelled bolero from this season's Lacroix show. Silver had on a Jean-Louis Scherrer haute-couture *bisht*, embroidered with silver thread and crystal beads, over a tuxedo. "Just something simple, Cameron!" Thrash hollered hoarsely when she saw him. "I knew you were going to upstage me."

Silver, who arrived with his friend Susan Casden, one of the few serious buyers of couture in Los Angeles, walked around the party pointing out clothes that had come from Decades: a vintage pink Azzaro with a silver-leaf-motif bodice; an Oscar de la Renta skirt from Decadestwo; a 1983 one-shoulder Chanel. He saw clients and old friends: Mica Mosbacher (who once invited him to Houston to attend a party with her and to meet her husband, Bob, the Secretary of Commerce under George H. W. Bush) and Melissa Mithoff, who recently débuted on Houston's best-dressed list. One client had e-mailed fifteen times that day, with questions about lipstick, jewelry, and hair. "Loose bun" was his advice.

Thrash patrolled a silent-auction table, to which Silver had donated a Lacroix haute-couture necklace, urging bidders on. "Come on, people! I wish I was serving tequila shots—normally I do. Drunk people bid more. But it's very French tonight and there's no tequila in France. There should be." In the library, beside a low marble-block coffee table decorated with fashion monographs, Silver met another client and her husband, who had made a fortune in nursing homes. "What are you, the Pope?" the husband asked, and Silver, good-humored, explained that he was wearing Middle Eastern garb. The husband gave him a high five in response. Thrash appeared: "Dinner is being served, y'all."

Tables for ten, covered in pink linens and pink roses, were arranged around the pool, which was flanked by long arcades whose arches framed a series of Warhol Marilyns. Thrash stood on the runway, in the center of the pool, and presided over a rapid-pace live auction: "Y'all have so much money, come on, baby, this is for the *Louvre!*" Then the models appeared, in wild dresses of yellow, orange, and pink, with necklines at the navel and enormous flowers everywhere. The Texas women were entranced. "I want that," one said to her husband, of a dress that would cost tens of thousands to have made. The men seemed less sure of what they were seeing. A cluster of them stood under an archway, expressing appreciation, in perhaps the only way they knew how.

"What do they call that? A chignon? That's sexy."

"This one is making me horny."

"I remember seeing that one on the pole a couple of weeks ago."

"Who wears this shit?"

After dinner, as waiters passed cognac on trays, Casden, beautifully attired in couture Lacroix, chatted with Marie Martinez, the Lacroix model and muse who is now director of couture for the house. She wore a black dress, with coral and jewel detail at the waist, and a black flower headpiece in her stark-white hair. Silver approached and told her she looked fabulous.

"This is an old, old dress," she said.

"I *want* some of those old dresses," Silver said flirtatiously. Martinez smiled, noncommittal. Perhaps it would take a little time. ♦

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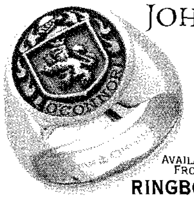

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FICTION

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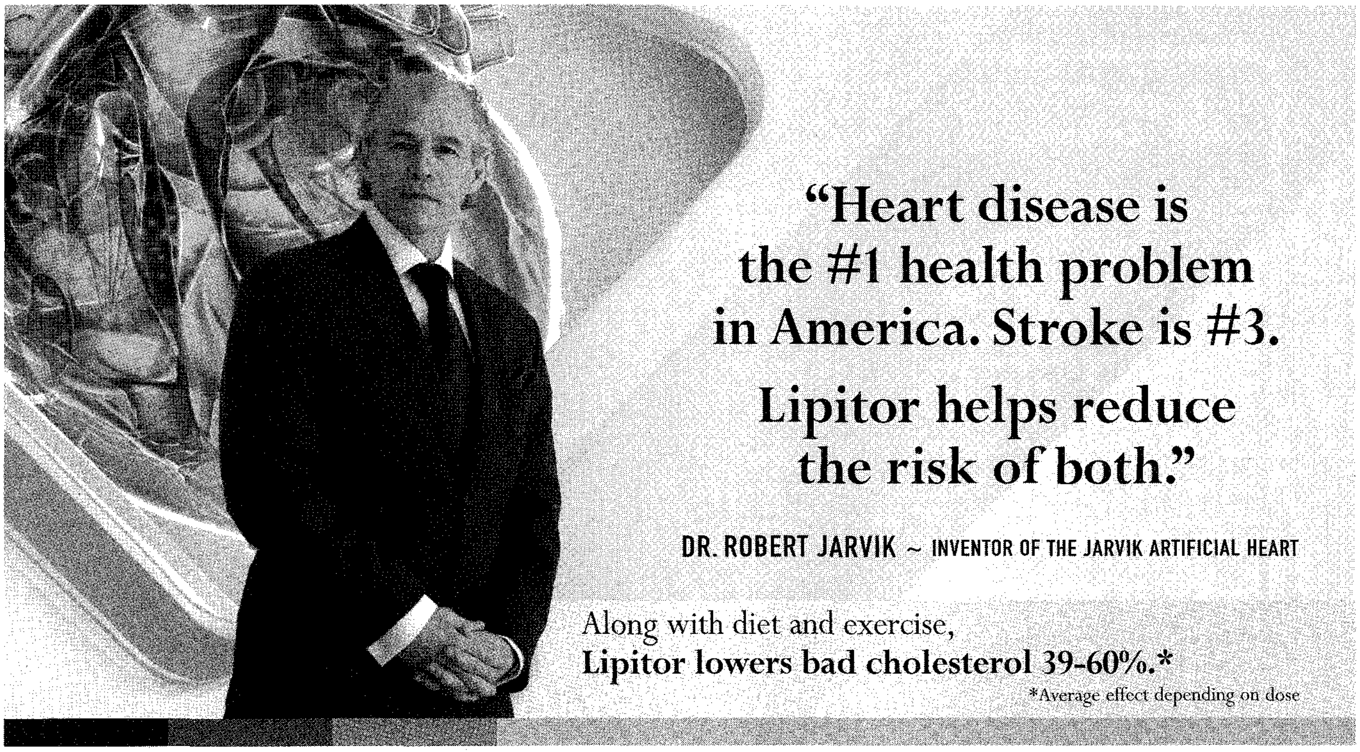
BY JONATHAN LETHEM

ADRIAN TOMINE

In the months after I'd auditioned for him, I would run into the legendary theatre director Sigismund Blondy at the movies, near-empty Thursday matinées of indifferent first-run films—"North Country," "Wedding Crashers"—in the decaying venues of the Upper East Side, where we both lived: the Crown, the Clearview, the Gemini; big rooms chopped into asymmetric halves, or quartered through the balcony. Blondy saw a movie every afternoon, he said, and could provide scrupulous evaluations of any title you'd ever think to mention—largely dismissals, though I do recall his solemn approval of "A Sound of Thunder," a time-travel film with a Ben Kingsley performance he'd liked. I'd see Blondy when the lights came up—alone, red scarf and pale elegant coat unfurled on the seat beside him, long legs crossed—unashamed, already hailing me if he spotted me first. Blondy dressed in dun and pastel colors, wore corduroys or a dancer's Indian pants; in winter he had holes in his knitted gloves, in summer a cheesy panama hat. He towered, moved softly and suddenly, usually vanished at any risk of being introduced. Soon I'd scan for Blondy whenever I entered a theatre, alone or not. Often enough I'd find him. We never sat together.

If this multiplex-haunting practice didn't square with Blondy's reputation as the venerated maestro of a certain form of miniaturist spectacle ("Krapp's Last Tape" in the elevator of a prewar office building, which moved up and down throughout the performance, with Blondy himself as Krapp, for cramped audiences of five or six at a time), it didn't matter, since that reputation hardly thrived. I'd auditioned—talked with him, really—for a role in a repertory production of several of Kenneth Koch's "One Thousand Avant-Garde Plays." Dianne Wiest sat with us in the back room of the SoHo Italian restaurant in which the Koch cycle was to be staged, and where this evaluative tête-à-tête took place. She followed our conversation soberly, her unexplained presence typical of Blondy's Zelig-like infiltration of the city's culture. Within weeks I'd learned that Blondy had had a falling out with the restaurant's proprietor, stranding the enterprise. I'd waited, expecting some revival of the project, for months. Eventually I assumed I'd been replaced and kept half an eye on the *Times* for a notice of the thing. But the Koch never surfaced; nor did anything else. Maybe Blondy's run was over. Or on hiatus, in some deep ruminative lag. And then, in the months that followed, he gradually became my moviegoing doppelgänger.

The ritual was made official the first time he invited me out for a glass of red after the movie, as though that were the real point of the afternoon. We'd sit at some Madison or Second Avenue wine bar in the dimming hours, invariably alongside those waiting for their dinner dates, those who made even me feel old. Whether Blondy ever felt old I couldn't guess. His grandiosity, his U-turn anecdotes, his contempt for the obvious statement didn't invite such guesses, only the tribute of gratified awe. I gave it. Blondy was like a skater up his own river, a frozen ribbon the rest of us might have glimpsed through trees, from within a rink where we circled to tinny music. I told him I had quit acting the first time we left a movie theatre together, before even finishing a glass. Blondy's intimate smile seemed to say, not unsympathetically, that it was all for the best. We rarely talked about the film we'd just seen; instead we discussed great works—the Rothko retrospective, Fassbinder's "Berlin Alexanderplatz," Durrell's "Alexandria Quartet," whatever formed his present obsession. After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two or three glasses on an empty belly had made me dizzy—Blondy never showed any effects—we'd part on the sidewalk.

By the time it occurred to me that I hadn't seen Sigismund Blondy in a while, I couldn't have said how long a while was. Four months? Eight? It seemed to me he'd been in holey-gloves-and-red-scarf mode the last time we'd slipped from a theatre to a bar, but that didn't narrow it down much. We were headed back to scarf weather now. Maybe Blondy had summered somewhere—Provincetown?—and decided not to return, enlisting some local company to mount spectacles in a dockworker's bar or a bowling alley's lounge. Sig Blondy, big fish in a small pond? I knew no more consummate New Yorker, so I started to worry.

Neither of the two people whom Blondy and I knew in common had any reason to know that the director and I spent afternoons together, but when I called—the first didn't have Blondy's phone number, and the second had one that he thought was the "old number," then found another he recommended I try—neither was interested enough to ask why I wanted to track him down. Perhaps these days Blondy was less well remembered than I'd assumed. Blondy, likely in his early sixties, always seemed to me terrifyingly vital, but those in their early sixties might suddenly fail. Had I entered, without noticing, some quiet bargain struck among the proud bachelors of Manhattan, to get one another's backs? In my rapidly evolving fantasy, Blondy became pitiable, myself a rescuer. I rang the number. Blondy's machine was set to pick up on the first ring. It figured he'd be an old-school screener.

"Grahame," he said, interrupting my message. His tone was munificent, as if congratulating me for having the name I did.

I'd been reaching for words to distill my concern but now scrambled, defensively, for a joke. His relish at having lifted the receiver in the thick of my fumbling seemed akin to his pleasure at our old, ambiguous encounters in theatre lobbies, before we'd begun drinking. What I said now was "Don't you go to the flicks anymore, or are you ashamed to take the senior discount?"

"Oh, I go. Every afternoon. Just not in the old *neigh*-bore-hood."

"I miss you," I blurted.

He explained that he'd moved downtown, to Minetta Street. Hiding in plain sight, he called it. He'd spoken in the past of his devotion to the block of Seventy-eighth Street, where for decades he'd held down a rent-stabilized bargain, and of his persistent enchantment with the tribes of dog-walkers and nannies he'd mingled with there, once calling the Upper East Side "the last of the true Manhattan." But I didn't get a chance to ask him why he'd abandoned it. "I've got some questions I want to ask you," he said. "When can you get here?"

"Questions?"

"Better than questions, a *questionnaire*. You'll see."

"You want me to come to Minetta Street? Today?"

"Look, Film Forum is doing Mizoguchi—'Ugetsu.' Ever seen it?" There was something of the director in his bullying and beguiling, but it was in my nature, I suppose, to be directed.

"Ugetsu" astonished me. Discussing it after the two-fifteen matinée, while we looked on Sixth Avenue for a restaurant with a suitable bar, Blondy said that for years he'd felt that two scenes toward the end of the film were reversed from their ideal order—the only flaw, he'd always thought, in a perfect work of art—but that today, sitting at Film Forum, waiting for it, he couldn't spot the flaw he'd earlier been so certain of. "What's pathetic is that I'd presumed to go around all these years sure I knew better than Mizoguchi! It's as though I had to defend myself against the film's perfection." I was awed, as I maybe was supposed to be, at the scrupulousness with which he dwelled on what he cared for. Perhaps I was also awed at the change in our friendship. We'd gone to a movie that Blondy cared about, instead of trash, and for once we'd sat together in the theatre, so I could smell Blondy's faint but unmistakable doggish odor. It felt as though I'd stepped into Blondy's script, was now simultaneously the featured performer and the sole audience for the most infinitesimal of his productions.

When we'd settled down with two

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glasses of Syrah, Blondy drew from his pocket several worn photocopies. "O.K., these are the questions I've been wanting to ask you," he said, as if he'd been expecting my call in the first place.

"O.K."

"They're from Max Frisch's 'Sketchbook 1966-1971.' Ready?"

"Sure."

"We won't do the whole questionnaire. I'll pick and choose."

"Sure, fine."

"Are you sure you are really interested in the preservation of the human race once you and all the people you know are no longer alive?"

"Sorry?"

"That's the first question." He resumed his insinuating theatrical murmur. *"Are you sure you are really interested . . . "*

I did my best with the question, told Blondy I thought anyone ought to feel a value in the continuity of the species, but he interrupted. "No, you," he said. "How do *you* feel?"

"Yes, I'd be sad if there were no people."

He leaped to the next question. *"Whom would you rather never have met?"*

My only brush with Harold Pinter had been fiercely disappointing. I began to describe it. Blondy rushed me again.

"Would you like to have perfect memory? Just answer the questions that interest you, Grahame. *If you had the power to put into effect things you consider right, would you do so against the wishes of the majority?"*

"Look, Sigismund, what is this?"

"Are you convinced by your own self-criticism?"

"Too much, I'm afraid."

"Are you conscious of being in the wrong in relation to some other person—who need not necessarily be aware of it? If so, does this make you hate yourself—or the other person?"

His voice was so entrancing that I suspected we were both entranced. He might as well have asked to read me poetry, for all that I was persuaded he wanted my replies. I said, "What about *you*, Sig? You answer this one."

He nodded, raised his glass. "And hate myself for it."

Again, I wondered if I heard the sound of a trap snapping shut. Had I delivered my designated line? Were we perhaps getting to the point?

"Who?" I asked.

"Alan Zwelish," Blondy said.

Sigismund Blondy had known Alan Zwelish for several years, in the way of a Manhattan neighbor, repeatedly sighting a compelling face in passing instants as one or the other swerved from the street into the entrances of their buildings, which stood across and askew from each other, or in the same Chase A.T.M. lobby on Seventy-ninth, or in the late-night Korean shop collecting, if you were Zwelish, a pack of cigarettes, or, if you were Blondy, a bottle of ginger beer or a packet of wasabi peanuts. Or, most stirringly, far from the block they shared, at adjacent bookstalls in Union Square on a hot Saturday noon, where they honored the strangeness of detecting each other so far afield with a curt nod. That nod could have been the whole of it. But Blondy didn't play by the Manhattan-neighbor rules. He was provocative, voluble, grabby. He collected life histories, he'd once bragged to me, of the block's fleet of dog-walkers, maypoled in leashes on their way to the Park, confused to be approached when nearly anyone else would switch pavements to get a berth from roiling terriers. Cooed at strollered babies until lonely Tibetan nannies, invisible persons of Manhattan, practically swooned in his long arms. Blondy regaled waiters, too; I'd seen him do it.

Anyway, Alan Zwelish, short, muscled, his eyes sparkling with suspicion, sports coats pixied with dandruff, became a fascination. Bearded when Blondy first noticed him, Zwelish shaved within a year or so, revealing features younger and grimmer than Blondy had guessed, a knuckly chin and somewhat sensuous lips. Tenured-professorial in the pretentious facial hair, without it Zwelish was revealed to be no more than thirty-five. His Bogart smoking mannerisms seemed the result of mirror study and, like the pronounced beard, an attempt to gain control of the lower portion of his face. Blondy watched this proud, drum-tight personality fidget past him on the street and began projecting; he couldn't help it: an unfinished degree in journalism, concerned married sisters in New Jersey or Connecticut (but probably New Jersey), weights but no cardio, aggrieved blind dates, *Cigar Aficionado* and *Stereophile*, takeout menus, acres of porn. What was positive was this: Zwelish owned his apartment, the basement of a co-oped town house, and made a living consulting on business software—these facts Blondy got out of Alan Zwelish, semi-voluntarily, the first time he introduced himself, on Seventy-eighth Street.

The next time they passed, Zwelish attempted to look the other way, as though offering up this information had been a paying of dues, and he could now revert to nodding acquaintance. No dice, not with Blondy, who launched one of his in-medias-res gambits (the equivalent, maybe, of a Max Frisch questionnaire): the parrots were missing, had Zwelish heard? What? Zwelish hadn't ever seen the flock of green parrots, rumored to be pets escaped over the years, and which congregated in certain trees on York Avenue at Seventy-seventh, around which you could hear a tropical cloud of parrot conversation? These birds were a totem of the neighborhood; it was essential Zwelish see them. But Blondy hadn't managed to spot them for more than a week. Was Zwelish doing anything urgent at the moment, or would he join Blondy for a walk to search them out? Incredibly—or not, given Blondy's charismatic sway—Zwelish excused himself for a moment to put his briefcase inside and take a leak, then rejoined Blondy, and they strolled together to York. It was a perfect afternoon, a temperate wind rebounding off the river. They found the parrots easily. (Whether they'd ever been missing at all Zwelish was left to wonder.)

Now the hard little man had been cracked open. As Sigismund Blondy saw him, Zwelish walked in a fiery aura of loneliness, but Blondy had got inside the penumbra. Zwelish would grab Blondy on the street and describe family plights: the barely tolerated Passover at his—yes!—sister's in New Jersey, the difficulty of properly liquidating his father's gnarled-up assets, which were under his elderly mom's watch. And brag, essentially. Was Blondy drinking the crap water that came out of the Seventy-eighth Street taps? He should install such-and-such purification system in his sink. Cash sitting in a money-market account was as good as thrown away; Zwelish was in certain arcane tech stocks and had also acquired a Motherwell print. Blondy was invited to an East Hampton guesthouse weekend? That place was hell, trust Zwelish. Zwelish's high-school buddy had a place in the Berkshires, a better value. Blondy *rented*? Hopeless! Everything was a competition in which Blondy wouldn't compete, saying, "Look at who you're talking to, Alan. I'm like the parrots, just roosting here, decorating the area. I'd rather leave nothing behind but delicious memories." Bohemian standards Zwelish wouldn't ratify. "You're a fool," he'd say. "Yes," Blondy agreed, "I'm a fool, exactly." Zwelish narrowed his eyes. "But you don't know how dangerous it is to be a fool. Dangerous to yourself and others." Blondy thought, What others?

Possibly Zwelish meant the women. Sigismund Blondy, like any tall dissolute specimen, had women around him, in roles likely unclarified even to themselves: exes, friends, liaisons. Zwelish witnessed a certain number of the comings and goings of this elegant flock, which culminated in an introduction at a First Avenue Greek diner during morning hours suggestive of an overnight visit, before collaring Blondy alone one day to say, "O.K., Sig, how do you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Five different women I've seen you with in the past two months."

"Friends, Alan, those are my friends."

Zwelish crushed his cigarette under his running shoe, the way he wanted to stub out Blondy's line of defense. "Don't bullshit me. I see them lean into you. That's not friends."

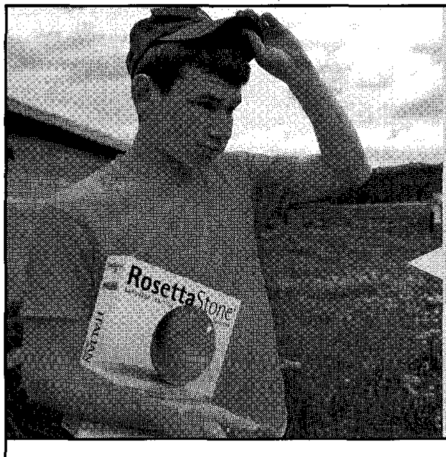
"When you reach my age, women lean into you for a variety of reasons."

"I could use some friends like that."

Blondy felt he'd been offered a significant confidence. Insouciant as he was, he hadn't ever felt that he could quite ask a man as unattractive as Zwelish how he made do. Before any tenderness broke out between them, however, Zwelish thrust a knife in. "I've seen you hitting on those illiterate babysitters, too. The whole block talks about it, you know."

This prospect tipped Blondy back on his heels for an instant: that he, who prided himself on his panoramic insight into Seventy-eighth Street, could be himself under the microscope. And, using that instant, Zwelish made his escape.

A bruising friendship, if it was one. And, like Blondy and me at the movies, many weeks could pass between encounters. Did Blondy only fantasize that Zwelish peered out of his basement window slats deciding whether or not, on a given afternoon, he wanted to see Blondy? In any case, when they did meet, Zwelish generally seemed to have



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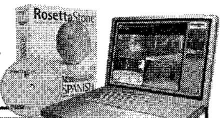

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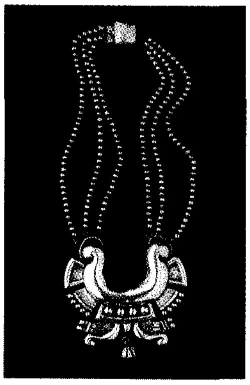

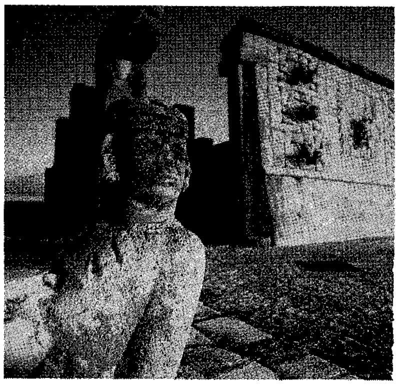

Treasures South of the Border

WHETHER YOUR IDEAL SPRING GETAWAY is one filled with adventure, serenity, or luxurious indulgences, Mexico has just what you're looking for, along with all the sun and warmth that winter-weary travelers crave.

Near the Yucatán capital of **Mérida**, thirty miles from the Gulf coast, the intriguing Mayan ruins of **Chichén Itzá** and **Uxmal**, and the pink flamingos in the **Celestún Biosphere Reserve**, are among the area's memorable sights. The historic city itself also leaves an imprint, with its lively markets, contemporary art galleries, and plaza dances in front of **San Idelfonso**, Mexico's oldest cathedral.

Taxco, the world-renowned silver jewelry center, lies a hundred miles southwest of Mexico City. Winding cobblestone streets in this mountainside colonial city lead to hidden courtyards, sky-high panoramas, and the pink Baroque-style **Santa Prisca** church. The outdoor pool of the Hotel Posada de la Misión is bracketed by views of Santa Prisca's tiled towers, and a 1956 stone-mosaic mural by Juan O'Gorman, the famous Mexican artist and architect.

In the southern highland city of **Oaxaca**, ancient American, colonial, and contemporary cultures draw you into their close coexistence. Not to be missed are the impressive Zapotec temples at **Monte Albán**, the pre-Columbian art collection of native son Rufino Tamayo, the gilded interior of **Santo Domingo** church, and the markets and galleries filled with the food and crafts of today's Zapotec denizens. Visitors can stay at the luxurious Camino Real Oaxaca, built as a convent in 1576, and are advised to book early for the brilliant spectacle of the **Guelaguetza**, the annual Oaxacan dance festival held in July.

Water is the key to wish fulfillment at **Los Cabos**, where the Sea of Cortés meets the Pacific at the tip of Baja. Golfers set their sights on the shimmering views from Jack Nicklaus- and Tom Fazio-designed greens, and fishermen come with blue marlin dreams. Sybarites and gourmets gaze at the turquoise tranquility from the terraces, restaurants, and spas of Las Ventanas al Paraíso and other resorts with prime cliff-top views.

Perhaps the best escape of all is to dive beneath the water around the coral reef at the **Cabo Pulmo** marine sanctuary. Here, in what Jacques Cousteau called "the aquarium of the world," the buzz of life is hushed but the opulence couldn't be more dazzling.

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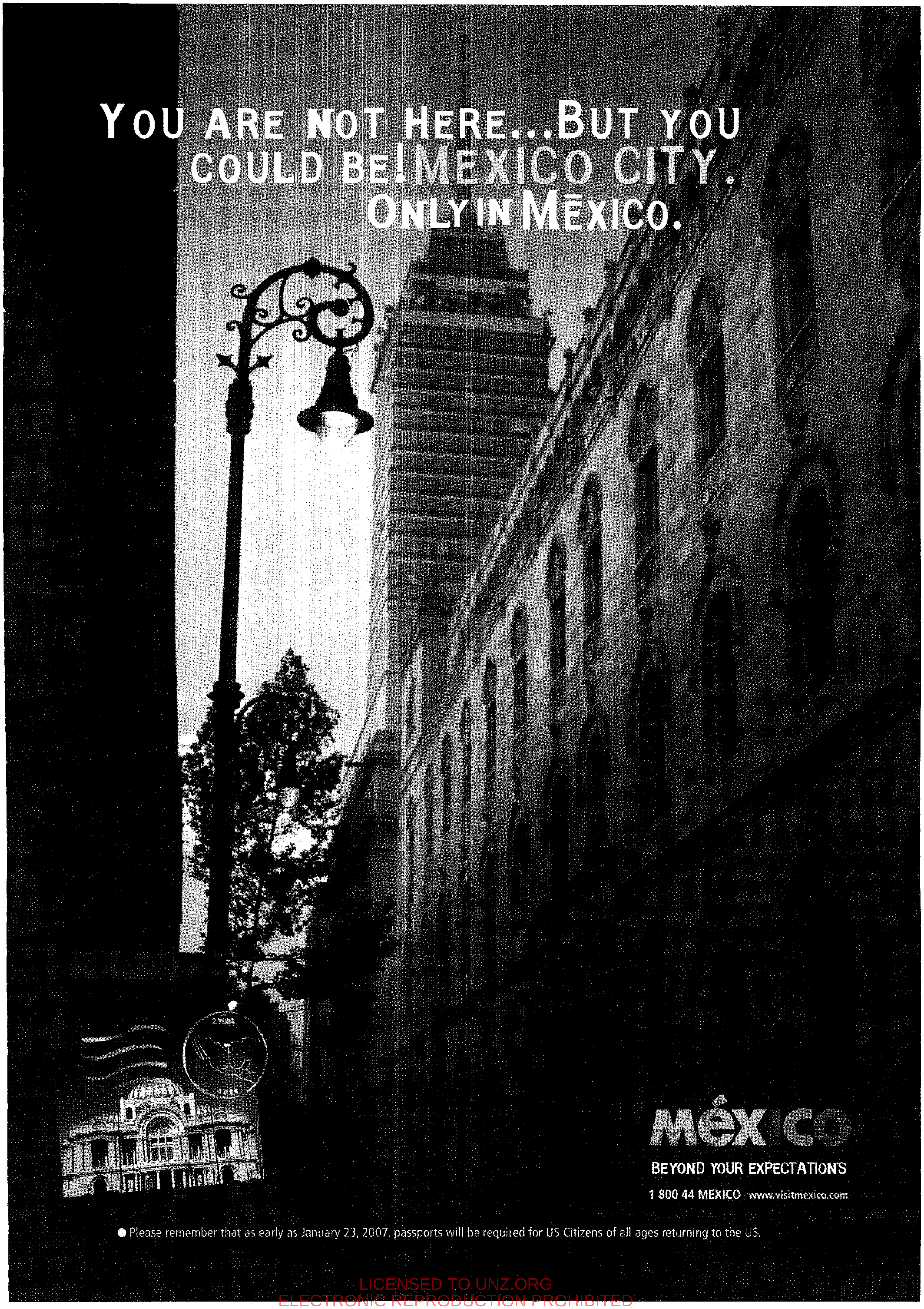

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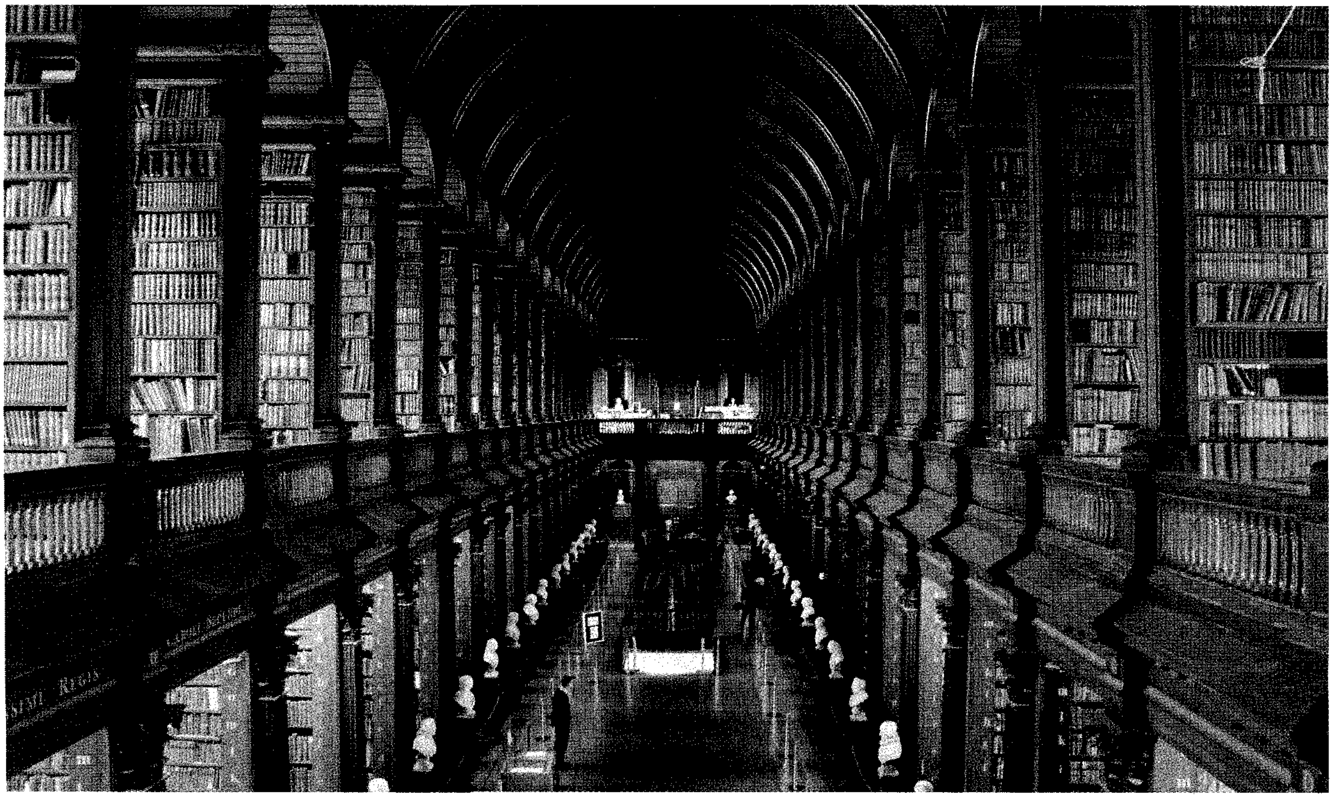

The Long Room at Trinity College, one of the most revered spaces in the world for bibliophiles.

STORIED SPOTS

Dublin is the birthplace of many famous storytellers. Find out more about the city's celebrated writers through the landmarks integral to their own personal narratives.

Ireland has produced enduring works of art for more than a thousand years. One of the country's earliest and most treasured is the Book of Kells. A priceless illuminated manuscript of the gospels labored over by Celtic monks, it is on permanent display in the **Old Library** of Dublin's Trinity College.

From there, a pleasant walk up the lively O'Connell Street thoroughfare leads to the **Dublin Writers Museum**, which can put the city's more recent literary past into context and direct visitors to individual writers' landmarks.

The nineteenth-century satirist Oscar Wilde, who tweaked the Victorians in works that included "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and "The Importance of Being Earnest," is venerated at 1 **Merrion Square**. This stately Georgian house, where Wilde's family once lived, is open for guided group tours. A statue of the foppish Wilde lounging atop a rock across the way appears to observe the goings-on with amusement. A living memorial to the writer, the **Oscar Wilde Centre for Irish Writing** at Trinity College, nurtures the talents of students at his alma mater.

The Nobel laureate George Bernard Shaw, who spent part of his childhood immersed in the **National Gallery of Ireland** collections, left one third of his royalties to the Dublin art museum. The "Pygmalion" author's generosity has enabled the National Gallery to acquire outstanding paintings and sculptures from the past two centuries, including an iconic, full-size statue of the playwright and passionate socialist.

Fans of Shaw can visit his birthplace at **33 Synge Street**. The family home has been restored to the way it looked during the Victorian era, when Shaw was young and began conjuring up the characters who later populated his plays.

The author of one of the most important novels of the twentieth century is memorialized at the **James Joyce Center**, 35 North Great George's Street. The center displays the original door to 7 Eccles Street, which was the home of Leopold Bloom, the fictional "Ulysses" character.

Dublin-bound travelers may want to schedule their trip to coincide with Bloomsday, observed every June 16th in honor of the date that "Ulysses" takes place. The jovial event, which inspires some participants to don Edwardian garb, includes "Ulysses" readings, performances, pub crawls, cultural activities, and tributes to literature's remarkable innovator.

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some willful challenge ready, as if he prepared with flash cards. "Not awake yet?" if he saw Blondy with coffee in the afternoon. "Never awake at all anymore," Blondy would say, always willing to play the decrepit jester, the has-been, hoping he could un-push Zwelish's buttons. "Want a job, Blondy? You should write an opera about Donald Trump. He's what passes for a hero these days!" Blondy didn't compose operas, but never mind. Still, after Zwelish's initial remark they'd often fall into the earlier style of more relaxed banter. And Zwelish sometimes let his guard down and complained, obscurely, about "modern urban women." He'd only gloss the topic, and Blondy didn't press at the sore point. Zwelish seemed to know how vulnerable Zwelish wanted to get.

"Can't you get one of those babysitters to do your laundry for you?" Zwelish said one day when he saw Blondy humping a Santa Clausian bag to the Chinese dry cleaner. Zwelish seemed particularly keen and chipper, and rolled up his sleeve to show off a nicotine patch. More bragging. He explained that he'd already stepped down two patch levels, after fifteen years of pack-a-day smoking.

"I never thought of this before," said Blondy, "but if you *wanted* to smoke but were having trouble getting started, the patch could really do the trick, couldn't it?"

"What are you talking about?"

"If you wanted to be a smoker," Blondy said, explicating the joke. "You could step up instead of down." Zwelish brought out his silly side; he couldn't help it. "Once you get to the top level, you tear off that patch and—voilà!—you'd want a cigarette *urgently*."

"Fuck you," Zwelish said, and walked away. His self-improvements were apparently no laughing matter.

Yet Sigismund Blondy, being who he was, found Zwelish all the more precious for his touchiness. He constituted a test that Blondy, who'd sledded on pure charm through so many controversies, couldn't pass. He adored Zwelish for causing him, at this late date, to want to do better, try harder, give more.

It was months later that the real opportunity came: Alan Zwelish's definitive self-renovation, one that Blondy instantly vowed to treat only reverently, beatifically. Zwelish returned from a mysterious trip in possession of an Asian wife. Blondy heard it first from another neighbor (shades of "the whole block knows"), who included a nosy speculation as to whether the union had been made by online advertisement or some other mechanical arrangement, before he saw her for himself. From Vietnam, it was revealed when they met on the street, and tiny enough to make Zwelish look tall. Doris, Zwelish introduced her as, though he later confided that her name was something else, Do Lun or Du Lan. Bright dark eyes and features so precise they seemed tooled. At this first meeting Blondy clasped Zwelish's hand, took his elbow, gave his warmest congratulations. Almost bent to kiss Doris, but thought better. She was too self-contained and skittish, a cipher. Zwelish pulled her close to him, seeming for once immune to hurt, a being formed only of pride and delight. Blondy was a part of the family if only because at the moment anyone, even a passing stranger, would have been. Blondy watched them disappear into the basement apartment, Zwelish gallantly rushing past Doris to unlock the gate, and felt a disproportionate happiness, one he suspected he'd have to make an effort to conceal.

Zwelish never attacked Blondy now, his sarcasm apparently totally evaporated, and if Blondy ever experimented with a teasing joke (calling Doris "Mrs. Z") it seemed to go right over Zwelish's head. Or under it, as if the man were floating. They'd greet each other heartily, with or without Doris in Zwelish's tow. It was as though Zwelish had advertised the director to Doris in advance as a sterling friend, a local pillar, and then so invested in the notion that he forgot his old wariness. Doris, when she was along, watched carefully. Her English wasn't hopeless, once you pierced the gauze of the almost total deference she showed her husband, never speaking without checking his eyes for cues. Who knew what else she was capable of, what life she'd led before, what life she'd expected coming here? Zwelish, who worked increasingly from home, who made fewer consulting trips out of town, kept her attached at the hip.

Soon enough Doris's pregnancy was noticeable on her scrawny frame. Her

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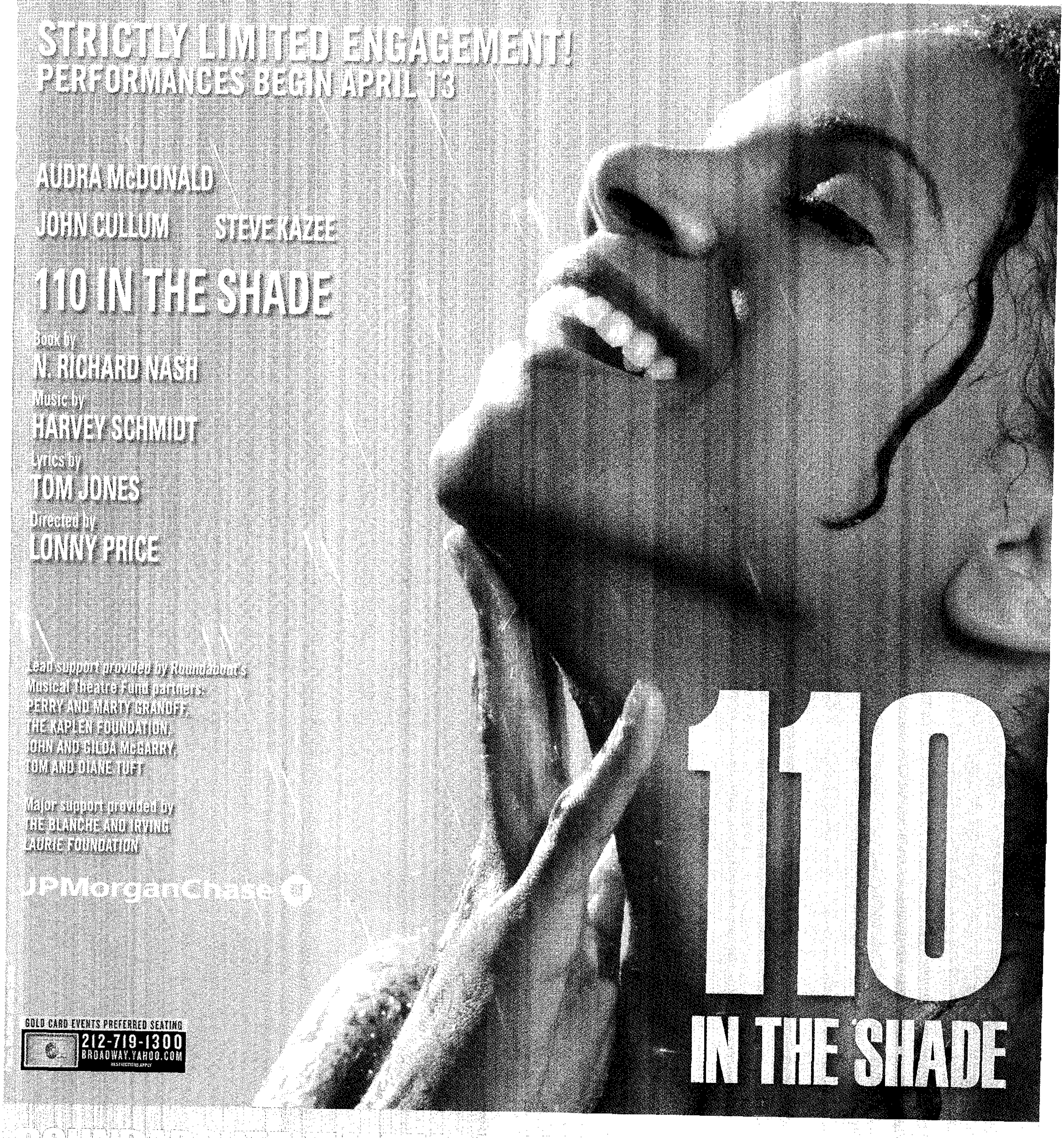

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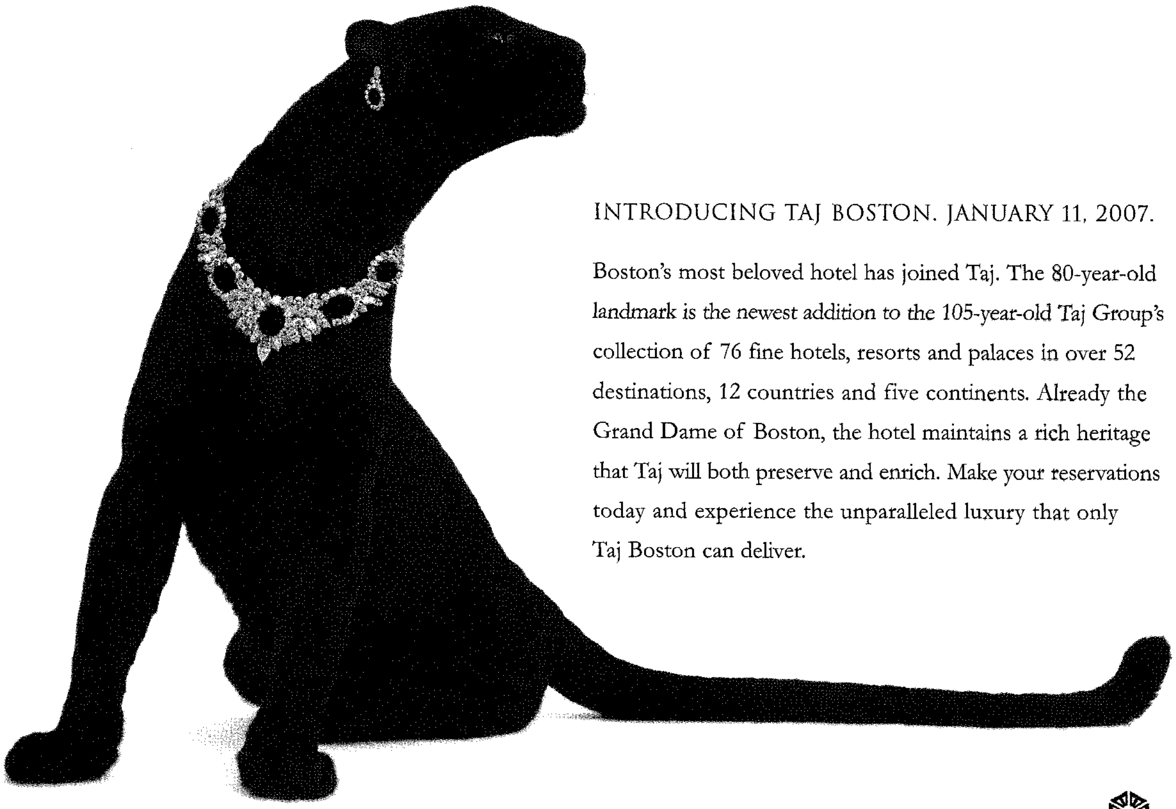

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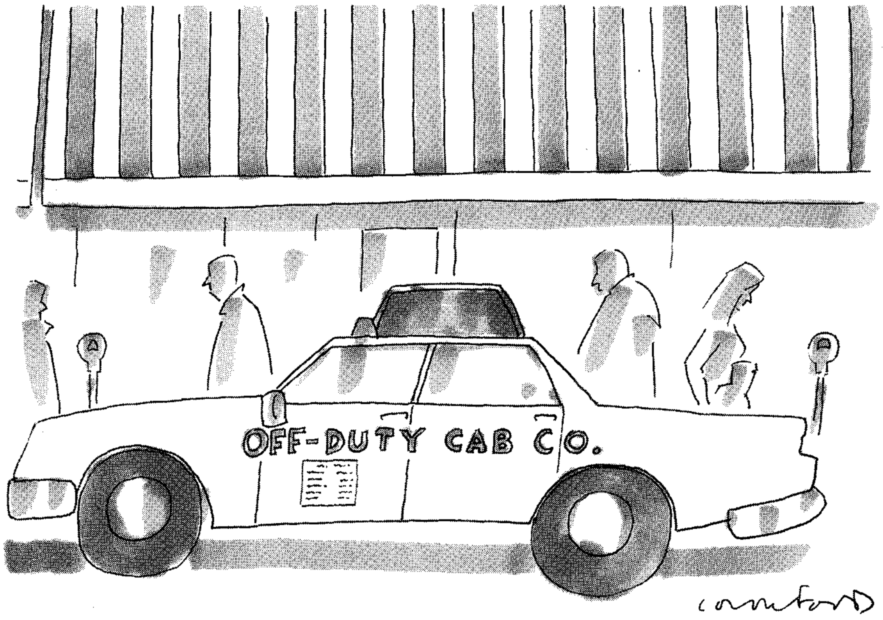
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posture was too good to hide it past the third month. Zwelish accepted these congratulations, too, but distantly. This was a cold winter, everyone battened into woollen layers and readily excused from dawdling in the open, and Zwelish and his expectant young wife were more and more like figures in a snow globe, viewable but uncontactable from the human realm. They didn't seem happy or unhappy, just curled into each other, whispering on the street, a totally opaque domestic unit. Blondy couldn't get a rise or anything else out of Zwelish, and I knew Blondy well enough to feel how this irked him. It explained the reckless choice he made. Likely, given his history with Zwelish already, Blondy knew it was reckless, though he did it wholly in gentleness and out of sheer enthusiasm. One day when Doris was five or sixth months along and spring had broken out on the street, Blondy ran into her alone as she returned, waddling slightly, from the Korean market. He insisted on carrying her plastic bags to the door of the basement apartment.

This was bad enough, really, since it wasn't beyond Zwelish's established range to feel this as a rebuke for not having accompanied Doris to the store. But worse, much worse, at the door Blondy reached under Doris's sweater and T-shirt, not without asking first, and cupped his palm underneath the globe that burgeoned there. He did it elegantly—nothing but elegance, with a woman especially, was possible for Blondy. Doris wasn't jarred. Blondy didn't linger. Just felt it and murmured something about "a miracle," and something else about "lucky Alan." Asked "Boy or girl?" and Doris told him: "Boy."

Zwelish, who'd heard their voices and come to the window, now rushed out, unlocked the gate, and pulled Doris inside. He seemed to have some imprecation caught in his throat and which produced a kind of angry hiccup as he glared up at Blondy. Then, with his wife, he was gone.

Conveniently, Zwelish was alone when he next met Blondy on the street. He lowered his shoulder as they came near each other, and, when Blondy said his name, he squared and delivered a sour look. "What do you want from me?" he asked Blondy. "Nothing you wouldn't want to give" was Blondy's reply.

"Why'd you call me 'lucky'?" Zwelish asked.

"What?"

" 'Lucky Alan.' What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing," Blondy said, exhausted at last.

"Then why don't you just keep your distance." Zwelish exited on the line.

Now came the deep valley in their relations, though Blondy somehow never doubted it would eventually be crossed. Weeks or a month could go by without their passing on the street, and words were never spoken. Blondy was busy then, in the effort that included our own first meeting, the Koch plays. The boy was born, and the little triad was sighted on Seventy-eighth Street, always self-reliant and self-contained, always in a hurry. And, finally, Blondy uncovered the existence of the "whole block"; it consisted of an older woman (meaning, I guessed, Blondy's age) living in Blondy's own building, whom Blondy mainly identified with a boring dispute over recycling, and who, it turned out, was eagerly running him down to absolutely anyone, from the market Koreans to new tenants; to the dog-walkers she'd interrogate after their talks with Blondy, as if deprogramming them; to, presumably, Zwelish. One of the dog-walkers, the most garrulous and multifariously connected (he walked the Jack Russell and the corgis and the aging dachshund), spilled it all to Blondy, at last. And also said that Zwelish himself had once halted on the sidewalk to take part in the latest Blondy-trashing session. That Zwelish had said he'd never trusted Blondy, was "always just playing along," whatever that meant. As though Blondy's affection were so pernicious it had to be negotiated with.

In the earlier months of this stalemate, Blondy had spotted Zwelish with or without his new family four or five times, then Doris alone with the boy in a stroller two or three others. Blondy hadn't noticed to what degree he'd pridefully withdrawn from the daily life of the block (this would have been the period of the great escalation in my multiplex encounters with Blondy, when we most frequently "accidentally" rendezvoused, and ended up at wine bars) until the garrulous dog-walker stopped him and delivered the news: Alan Zwelish had died, suddenly, of an inoperable brain tumor, discovered only weeks before it killed him. Doris and the child had inherited whatever he had, and an insurance claim was going to keep them in the apartment across the street. Here was the full horror of a relationship that both relied on chance meetings and was subject to utter estrangement: what you could miss in an interval. In this case, the whole end.

There was only one possible choice at the news. Blondy rushed to the apartment to see Doris. She let him in. Entering Zwelish's lair for the first time ever, seeing—yes!—the high-end audio equipment and the pile of free weights, as well as the framed Motherwell, and most of all the one-year-old playing in a folding crib littered with the plush toys he suspected were Zwelish's handpicked tokens of adoration, made Blondy's heart righteous, as if confirmation of his old guesses proved the claims Zwelish had always refused. Doris sat across from him, rigid in her chair, eyes dry. She offered him nothing, and he didn't approach her, or the child—this wasn't a visit, it was a reckoning. He started with the only words to start with, "I'm sorry," meant as an overture to the explanations he wanted to offer whether Doris cared or understood. But she had a clarification of her own to make, one that threw his motives into irrelevancy.

"I'm glad he's gone."

Blondy hadn't misheard. Her syntax was exact and unmistakable, despite the accent. The sentiment laid bare.

"Why?"

"He never let me go anywhere." Doris's tone was angry, the feeling fresh. "We only fought all day."

Blondy just nodded, needed no prompting to accept the truth of this account.

"I didn't love Alan. Now we"—she turned, to make Blondy understand she included the boy—"have this. Much better."

Blondy began weeping, openly, pouring out stuff he didn't know was inside, matters of his fear of death generally, as well as rage at Alan Zwelish for having pushed him away and at himself for having let himself be pushed.

"You cry," Doris said, not cruelly.

Having been chosen or volunteered to receive the confession from Blondy that Doris Zwelish had preëmpted, I fastened on the real-estate implications. They seemed to me not inconsiderable, given Blondy's Seventy-eighth Street rent stabilization. "Your response was to move from the block?"

"I couldn't confront the recycling lady, to begin with," Blondy said. "Let alone watch Doris raising the kid before my eyes—what if he came out looking like Alan? The block wasn't mine anymore. I was like a zombie—they'd be right to shun me after a while. I was embarrassed for myself, but also for Zwelish. Nobody could forget him if I didn't go."

"So it was altruistic, moving away?"

"*Necessary*, Grahame."

Again I felt a paranoiac certainty that in telling his tale Sigismund Blondy had enlisted me in a theatrical invention—cast me in a role—for the benefit of an unknown audience, perhaps only himself. There was no Alan Zwelish, or Alan Zwelish had never married or died: the whole episode was confabulation. For an instant I wanted to go to the library and dig for an obituary. But then I knew that the story was true. Inventing a smoker who'd quit and then succumbed to cancer was beneath Blondy. No, my feeling of unreality was a sympathetic response, not a clue to a lie: I'd been infected with Blondy's own fear, that grandiosity had made his human self specious—a *zombie*. He fled Seventy-eighth Street afraid he'd made it a stage for theatrics. In his nightmares he might have heard this accusation, delivered in the recycling lady's voice: not that he was molesting nannies but that he treated others as figures in a shadow play.

The moment I suspected this horror I wanted to assuage it, by speaking of his true and inexpressible feelings for Zwelish. "You don't choose who you love, Sigismund."

Blondy looked relieved that I was chasing a moral in his fable, rather than staring with him into the black hole of his personality. "I like that," he mused. "You don't choose who you love. Or who loves you. *That* was Alan's problem."

"No wonder he was pissed. Whatever he was searching for, nothing could have made him expect *you*."

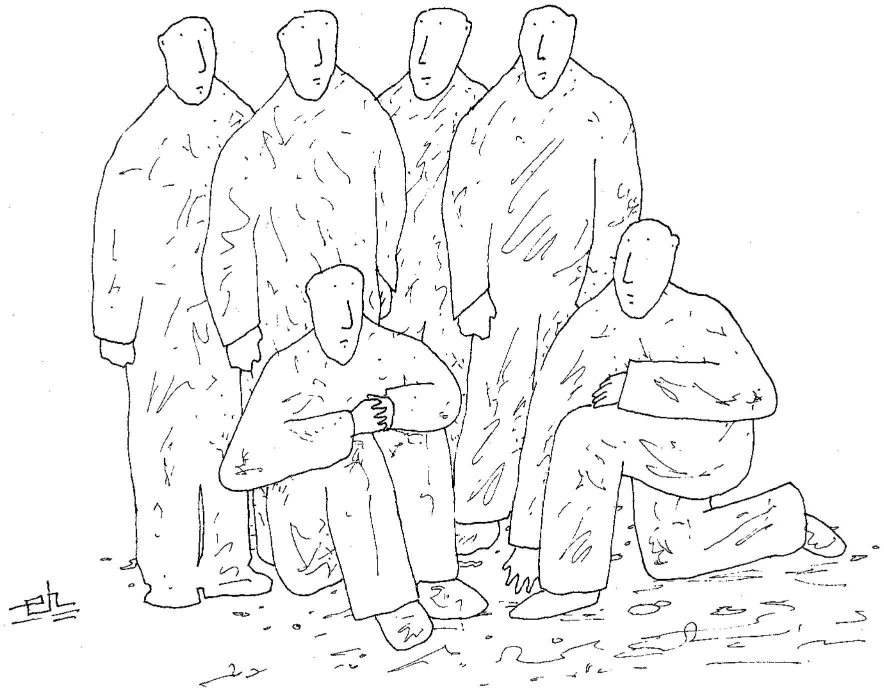
"Ha!"

I'd have done anything for Blondy at that moment, and, correspondingly, I loathed Alan Zwelish, though I knew there was more Zwelish than Blondy in me, which was likely the reason I was seated here. I hated Zwelish for showing Blondy death, just as I'd hate a teen-ager for informing a five-year-old that Santa Claus was a fake. I hoped Blondy would live to a thousand, for revenge.

"*Let us assume that you have never killed another human being. How do you account for it?*"

"Sorry?"

"That's the next question." Blondy had unfolded his photocopies again. "Or this: *Which would you rather do: die or live on as a healthy animal? Which animal?*" ♦



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IN THE NOW

Where Karl Lagerfeld lives.

BY JOHN COLAPINTO

The headquarters of Chanel are situated in two adjacent eighteenth-century buildings on the Rue Cambon, in Paris, occupying a labyrinthine suite of rooms on five floors, above a street-level Chanel boutique. One evening last December, Karl Lagerfeld, the label's artistic director, and twenty-two assistants—hair, makeup, shoes, jewelry, music—crammed into a room on the complex's top floor to conduct a fitting for a collection that was to be shown six days later, in Monte Carlo. Many male designers wear T-shirts and jeans not only to work but also at runway shows—as if to suggest that they are somehow above the world of trend and fashion they inhabit. Lagerfeld, who was dressed in a tight Dior suit of broad gray and blue stripes, and a pair of aviator sunglasses, disdains this practice. "I don't think I'm too good for what I'm doing," he says. His starched shirt had a four-inch-high collar that fit snugly under his chin, and his hair—whitened with a gesso-like dry shampoo—was pulled into a ponytail. His large belt buckle was encrusted with diamonds; his tie, looped with silver chains, was fixed with a jade Cartier clasp from the nineteen-twenties. He was wearing fingerless black biker gloves that bore silver grommets, etched with the Chanel logo, on each knuckle and were equipped, at the wrists, with small zippers that carried faintly S & M overtones. "*Très chic, non*?" he said, holding up a hand to be admired. A chunky Chrome Hearts ring adorned the pinkie finger, over the glove.

Lagerfeld took a seat at a long table at one end of the room. Sipping from a glass of Coke Zero—fresh glasses were brought to him at intervals on a lacquer tray by an assistant—he surveyed the fitting model, a baby-faced woman with a slim, ideally proportioned body, which Lagerfeld nevertheless judged to be a little plump. "She has maybe two kilos that she should lose," he whispered to his top assistant, Virginie Viard. Over the next three hours, the model tried on a series of garments that Lagerfeld had spent the previous six weeks conceiving: embroidered tweed skirt suits, tulle dresses festooned with camellias, and skintight flannel-Lycra pants. Each garment provoked swooning cries from his retinue:

"*Oooo, là, Karl!*"

"*Très jolie!*"

"*Superbe!*"

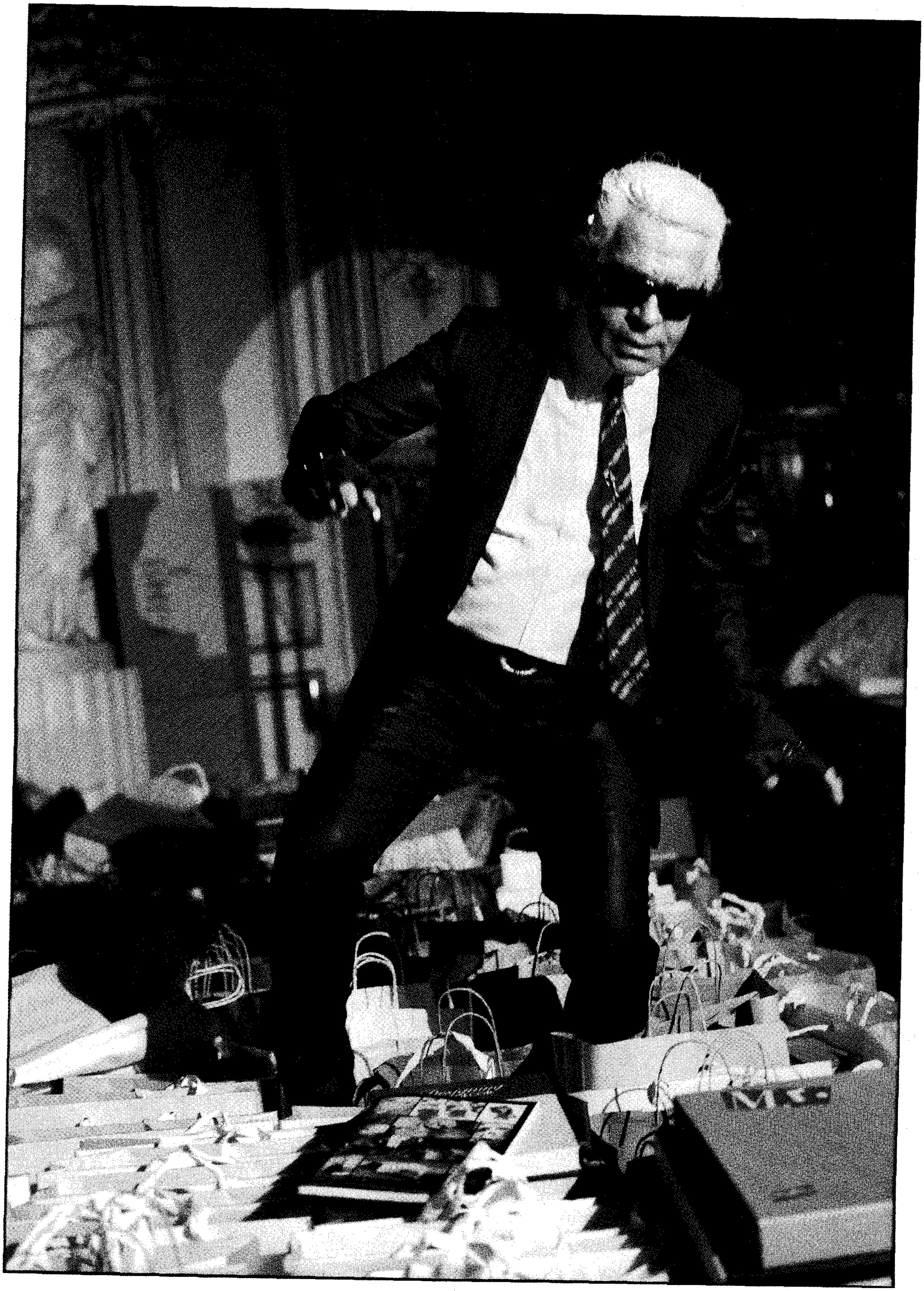
Lagerfeld accepted the praise with a shrug. "I do my job like I breathe," he said, in his customary manner—rapid, declamatory speech made more emphatic by a heavy German accent. "So if I can't breathe I'm in trouble!"

Since Lagerfeld took over Chanel, in 1983, more than a decade after the death of its founder, Coco Chanel, it has become one of the most profitable luxury brands in the world, with revenues estimated at more than four billion dollars a year. (The company is privately owned and does not release earnings figures.) A significant portion of the income comes from sales of accessories and makeup, and from No. 5 perfume, which was created by Chanel herself, in 1921. But accessories and perfume cannot sustain a fashion brand's prestige; the company must also stage extravagant runway shows featuring garments of outlandishness, originality, and fantastic expense. Lagerfeld, despite being nearly twice the age of many of his competitors at other labels (he admits to sixty-eight), has been able, season after season, to generate excitement and demand for Chanel's clothes. "His major strength is to be about his business in the present and never have a moment for other people to think that he's passé," Michael Roberts, the fashion director of *Vanity Fair* (and, before that, of this magazine) and a friend of Lagerfeld's for thirty years, says. Lagerfeld has maintained his preëminence for five decades, and without any visible sign of strain—unlike his contemporary Yves Saint Laurent, who, until he retired, in 2002, took a Proustian attitude to designing collections, experiencing nervous breakdowns over the hemline juste. "Yves pursued the goal of poetic designer suffering for his art," Roberts says. "I can't imagine Karl for one minute sitting down and thinking, I'm going to suffer for my art. Why should he? It's just dresses, for God's sake."

Until recently, Lagerfeld produced eight collections a year for Chanel (both ready-to-wear and haute couture), five for the Italian luxury label Fendi, and several for labels under his own name—a staggering workload. In 2002, he added an extra Chanel show to his schedule: a high-end ready-to-wear collection designed to profile the work of the Paris *métiers d'art*, the ateliers that create, by hand, the embroideries, beading, tulle flowers, hats, and shoes on which couture designers rely. (Chanel bought the ateliers in 2002, but all the Paris-based couturiers use them.) The first of these so-called "satellite" collections was shown in 2002, in Paris, and it was such a commercial success that Chanel decided to give similar shows a permanent place on its calendar and to stage them in different cities.

Lagerfeld's ability to create so much clothing for three different labels makes him unique among fashion designers, but he is also a photographer whose work appears in glossy magazines around the world. He shoots the Chanel press kits and catalogues that accompany the collections, as well as fine-art photography, which he periodically displays in

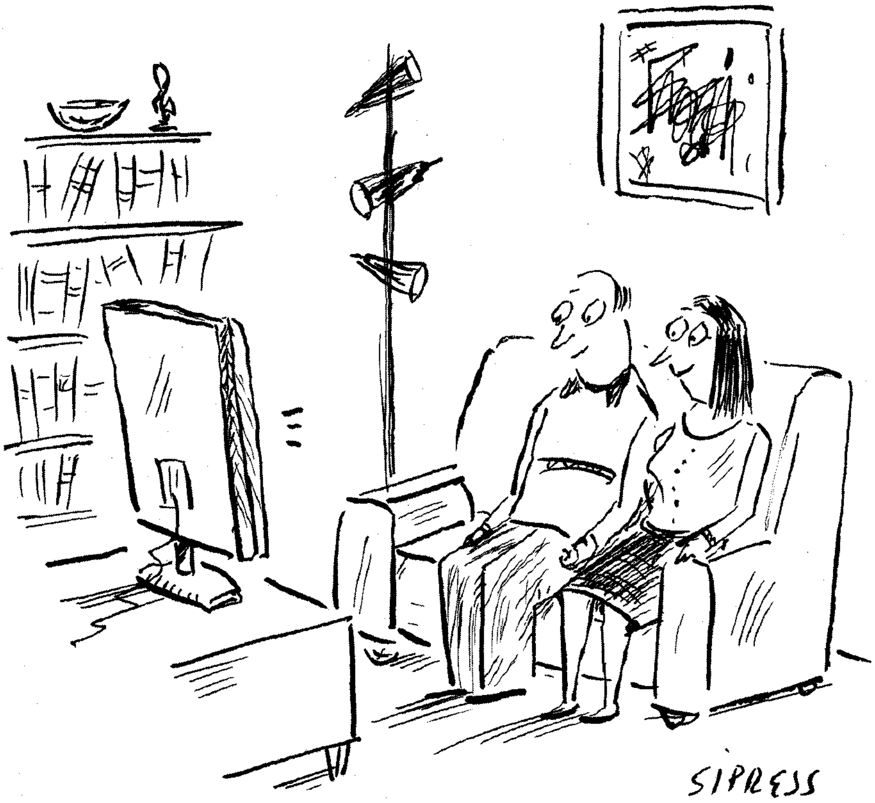
Lagerfeld cautions, before giving a tour of his house, "You will think I'm a madman." Photographs by François-Marie Banier.



galleries. (He recently had a solo exhibition in Berlin.) An avid reader in four languages—English, French, German, and Italian—Lagerfeld also publishes books; his imprint, a division of the German house Steidl, is called Édition 7L, and a few years ago he opened a bookstore, also called 7L, in space adjoining his photo studio, on the Rue Lille. Édition 7L has published forty-one titles, on subjects that range across his many interests, which include (besides fashion and photography) literature, humor, advertising, music, newspapers, mythology, illustration, and architecture. Some of these books have a bracing impracticality: an anthology of the first ten years of the magazine *Interview* weighed forty-three kilos and was packaged in a wooden trolley of Lagerfeld's devising.

In 2002, however, Lagerfeld published a best-seller, "The Karl Lagerfeld Diet," which he co-wrote with his physician, Jean-Claude Houdret. "If you attach no importance to weight problems, if not being able to wear new, trendy small-sized clothes does not cause you any regret, this book is not for you," Lagerfeld writes in the foreword. The book combines sound weight-loss advice (cut calories) with idiosyncratic notions (avoid eating between 8 P.M. and 8 A.M.), but what made the book popular were Lagerfeld's anecdotes about his own dramatic weight loss.

From the late eighties through the nineteen-nineties, he was a mountainous man in tentlike black suits by Japanese designers such as Yohji Yamamoto, a fan constantly aflutter at his neck. In 2000, Lagerfeld declared this look démodé, and decided to remake his silhouette to resemble that of the reedy teen-age boys who stalked the catwalks at Dior Homme in slim jackets and pants by the designer Hedi Slimane. In a year, Lagerfeld lost ninety-two pounds, enabling him to squeeze into these suits, and he has kept the weight off. ("I eat next to nothing," he says.) Lagerfeld's self-transformation coincided with a burst of new activity. In November, 2004, he designed a clothing line for men and women for the fashionable discount chain H&M, which plastered its stores with Lagerfeld's image projected on two-story-high billboards. Most of the clothes sold out in the first two days, and Lagerfeld achieved a level of fame usually reserved for pop stars and movie idols. "I can no longer walk in the street," he says. "That's over." In Germany last December, hundreds of photographers rushed him at an awards ceremony. That month, he had to cancel a trip to Brazil when the government concluded that the cost of providing for Lagerfeld's security would be too great. Anna Wintour, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, says that Lagerfeld's burgeoning visibility was inevitable. "There's just so much more media focussed on fashion," she said. "And because Karl is such a fascinating and unusual character and such an establishment figure at the same time—and of course so extraordinarily talented—it's just been on a parallel course." Lagerfeld professes to be unfazed by the attention; his fortune-teller notified him long ago that this would happen. "She told me, 'The older you will be, the more success you will have.' So it's O.K., hmm?"



"Last week on 'Top Surgeon' Erica won immunity, while Carl was sent home for killing his patient during routine gallbladder surgery."

The fitting model strutted forward in a new outfit and posed in front of Lagerfeld. He scrutinized her through his dark glasses and frowned. He said that he did not like the way the assistant had arranged the neckline of the sweater the model wore. Several assistants converged on her and began to tug uncertainly at the fabric.

"Non, non!" Lagerfeld said.

He uncapped a black marker and, rings clacking, made a quick sketch on a pad in front of him. Lagerfeld derisively describes many of his colleagues as "playing the designer," because they drape fabric on a model or a dummy; he conceives his collections at a kind of platonic remove, in multicolored drawings on paper, and only rarely touches fabric. The picture he produced—a swift hash of lines suggesting a soignée woman—reflected his skill as an illustrator. (His work has been published in numerous books and magazines.) An assistant looked at the drawing and hustled to the model to make adjustments. Lagerfeld ripped the drawing from the pad, crushed it in his hands, and tossed it into a large wicker hamper, which, over the course of the evening, filled with similar small masterpieces. "I throw everything away!" he declared. "The most important piece of furniture in a house is the garbage can! I keep no archives of my own, no sketches, no photos, no clothes—nothing! I am supposed to do, I'm not supposed to remember!" He smoothed a gloved hand over the empty page in front of him and visibly relaxed.

Unlike creative people who fear the blank page, Lagerfeld has a horror of the full page, the page that cannot be altered—the page that possesses the power to bore. All successful fashion designers are boredom detectors, on the alert for when a look is no longer novel but ubiquitous. It can be easy to miss the boredom in Lagerfeld because he's so fleet, so mercurial—so busy. But his frenzied multitasking suggests the depths his boredom could reach, if it were allowed to gain a purchase on him. He has devoted his existence to living as much as possible in the present, keeping himself attuned to trends, not just in fashion but in art, politics, movies, and music. "I go to Colette," he says, referring to the eclectic boutique on the Rue Saint-Honoré. "I buy all the new things, I buy all the music magazines, listen to new music." (Last year, Lagerfeld released "My Favorite Songs," a two-disk CD that included selections by hipster artists like Devendra Banhart, LCD Soundsystem, Super Furry Animals, the Fiery Furnaces, and Stereolab, as well as by the punk band Siouxsie and the Banshees, the bandleader Xavier Cugat, and Igor Stravinsky.) Famous among his friends for his capacity to absorb information, Lagerfeld is also renowned for his ability to translate what he consumes into fashion. "Karl reads everything, looks at everything," the Paris fashion stylist Camille Bidault-Waddington says. "He's permanently filling himself with independent culture and establishment culture, so basically he knows everything, and he's like a sampling machine." Lady Amanda Harlech, Lagerfeld's "muse," concurs. "He said to me once, almost in a worried way, that he has to find out everything there is to know, read everything," she says. "The curiosity is ceaseless."

Lagerfeld's determination to stay current requires ruthlessness and a lack of sentimentality. He periodically rids himself of art, objects, and places that, previously, had been sources of inspiration and pleasure. People are not exempt. "He kind of passes on, because he doesn't like the past," one of the people who travels in Lagerfeld's circle says. "So then he decides you're the past and then he just puts you in the trash." Lagerfeld says, "I have an entourage of people of today. Because people can work with me for a hundred years but they have to stay informed. And no regrets, no remove, not saying, 'Oh, things were better then.'" According to his publishing partner, Gerhard Steidl, when Lagerfeld reads a thick paperback, he tears out the pages as he finishes them.

"It's going to be huge! Cheese-flavored vodka!"

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Paradoxically, Lagerfeld is a devotee of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and he has been a serious collector of Art Deco. His passion for history is reflected in his dress, a mixture of the contemporary (Dior jackets worn with skintight Diesel jeans) and the self-consciously retro, including antique jewelry and custom shirts by Hilditch & Key, with high, stiff collars that recall gentlemen like Walther Rathenau, an early-twentieth-century German Jewish industrialist who was the model for a character in Robert Musil's "The Man Without Qualities," and Count Harry Kessler, a nineteenth-century Anglo-German art patron who ran a small publishing house, wrote several volumes of diaries (which Lagerfeld has read), and was legendary for his dandified style of dress. To Lagerfeld, Rathenau and Kessler represent all that was noble about Weimar Germany. "I'm German in my mind," Lagerfeld says, "but from a Germany that doesn't exist anymore."

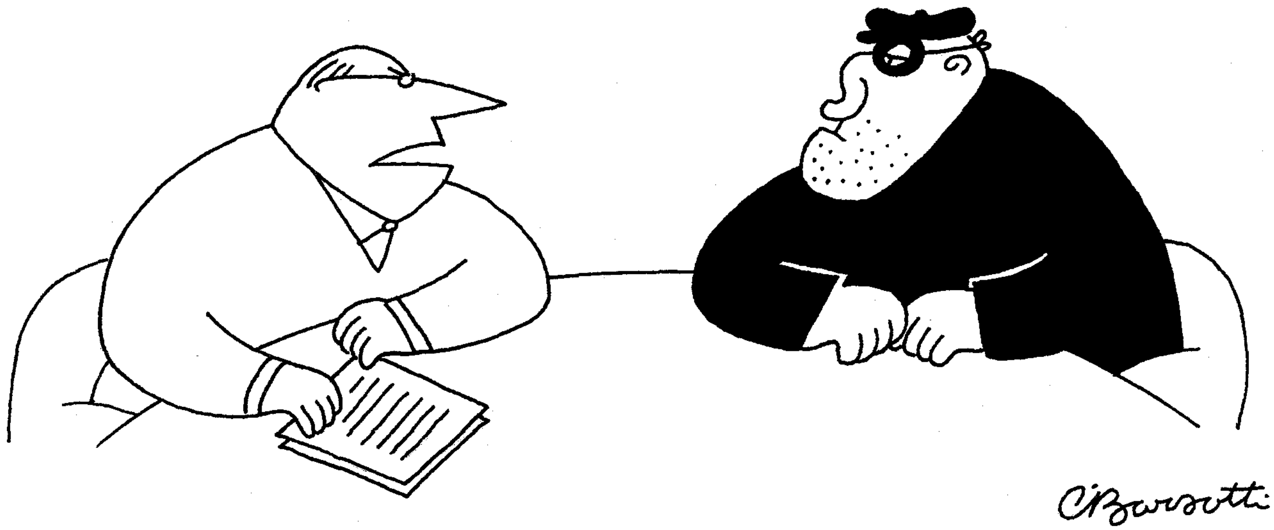
Lagerfeld's love of blending past and present is obvious in his description of his new home, on the Quai Voltaire, on the Left Bank. Having purchased four apartments on two floors of a two-hundred-year-old building overlooking the Louvre, he is gutting the place and constructing a town house. The upper floor will contain only furniture and art made after the year 2000, including pieces by the Bouroullec brothers, Marc Newson, and others. The lower floor, Lagerfeld says, "is the Old World"; it will feature a large library furnished with pieces from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as from his Art Deco collection. Living in the house will be "like floating in your own spaceship over a very civilized past," Lagerfeld says. (Some years ago, he bought a mansion in Biarritz, where, he says, he spent millions of dollars refurbishing it, staffed it with servants, and stocked it with a hundred and fifty thousand of his books. In 2006, after realizing that he had not visited the place in two years, he sold it.)

In preparation for the move to the Quai Voltaire, Lagerfeld recently sold the house where he has lived for the last thirty years, an eighteen-thousand-square-foot mansion on the Rue de l'Université, and one afternoon in early December he was in the process of moving out. The house, a converted *hôtel particulier* built in the late seventeen-hundreds, is shielded from the street by a towering porte cochere, and sits beyond a cobblestone courtyard where a white-coated valet greets visitors and leads them into a foyer the size of an average two-bedroom Manhattan apartment. Through a doorway off the foyer is a room with gold-leaf moldings, a painted ceiling, a vast crystal chandelier, and a table forty feet long, surrounded by straight-backed chairs. Lagerfeld calls this "the most beautiful room in all of Paris," and says that it was designed by Jacques Verberckt, who decorated rooms at Versailles. But he prefers to entertain guests next door, in a small, less formal room, whose walls, from wainscot to ceiling, he has lined with rare German advertising posters from before the First World War. At the center of the room are a boxy Bauhaus sofa and an umbrella-like modernist lamp. In one corner, propped against the ornate molding, is a life-size cardboard cutout of Lagerfeld, glowering in dark glasses, from the H&M advertising campaign.

Lagerfeld was scheduled to attend a dinner party at eight but declined to say where. "I hate name-dropping," he said. Asked if the host was someone famous, he pursed his lips and muttered, "I am not knowing so many unknown people, hmm?" Indeed, he calls Mick Jagger "Micky." (Later, one of Lagerfeld's friends revealed that his hostess that evening was Mme. Chirac.) Recently, however, Lagerfeld claims to have lost almost all interest in going out. "I'm not a social person," he says. "Not that I'm not at ease. I'm pretty good, but it bores me. Not the people, but the whole thing. What for? It's not very productive. I only want to do what I have to do: fashion, photography, books. And that's all." He hates the telephone, and communicates with the outside world primarily through faxes, which he writes in flowing script with a fountain pen. "I have a direct line, but I don't even remember the number," he says. "I have cell phones, but I don't use them. Personally, it is nearly impossible to reach me." He insists that he is never lonely. "This is another cliché—the *loneliness*," he says in mocking tones. "I have to fight to be alone! And you have to recharge the batteries. People who can't be alone have a problem. Loneliness is a luxury for people like me."

Lagerfeld likes to insist that his passion for knowledge is a private matter: "There is only one thing I am really interested in, and that is knowing—not for display or conversation or discussion. I never discuss." He adds, with a Wildean flourish, "I like to look very superficial." But he seems to need to demonstrate that he is a man whose interests transcend fashion—this, despite his repeated avowals that he does not think he's too good for what he does. He frequently mentions his love for the poetry of Rilke and Emily Dickinson, and holds forth on the war poet Alan Seeger, whose work Édition 7L has published; but he does not discuss these subjects as an intellectual might—quoting lines from memory, analyzing themes. Rather, they are passing references in a zigzagging monologue, in which the words and ideas tumble out at such speed that they become almost unintelligible—digressions within digressions. "For me, the perfect writing is E. B. White—that's how one should write English," he told me at his home on the Rue de l'Université. "The sound, the language, what it evokes for me. I see New York with the eyes of his book about New York. Like Colette in French. Even someone like Léautaud—whom you probably don't know. Léautaud was the son of a courtesan and his father was a bad actor who became a *souffleur* in the Comédie-Française—you know, the one who sits in a box onstage and whispers lines to the actors when they forget them? Prompter! He wrote three books and then he started a publishing house, a very good one, the Mercure de France, and stayed all his life there as the editor of the Mercure literature review, and he loved cats and animals—which I'm not crazy for. Everything he did all of his life, I don't like, but his writing, for me, his descriptions of Paris—I go to the street where he went for fifty, sixty years, and I see it only with his eyes. He became famous in France in the fifties because Robert Mallet, from the Sorbonne, made on the radio—because there was no television—conversations with him, which were recorded. And I have them on CD; his voice is like an actor from another era. It's like Colette; she speaks French from an era that nobody speaks like this; they used to pronounce their 'r' very differently in French"—he demonstrates an "r" rolled with a trill in the front of the mouth, then hurries on: "I read poetry a lot and I even publish poetry. I made an edition of a woman called Catherine Pozzi, who was the mistress of Paul Valéry—she was married to a man who wrote plays, but they divorced quickly and she was the daughter of a famous doctor. You know the painting of Sargent's of a very handsome man in a red robe? That was her father, the very famous Dr. Pozzi, who was Sarah Bernhardt's doctor and lover and . . ."

Lagerfeld spoke like this, almost without interruption, for nearly two hours. He then nodded discreetly to his hovering manservant, who vanished, then quickly reappeared with a silver salver upon which sat a pitcher of water, an empty glass, a foil envelope, and a spoon. Lagerfeld sprinkled brown powder from the envelope into the glass, added just enough water to wet the granules, then used the spoon to stir the mixture into a thick paste that resembled chocolate pudding but was, he said, protein. He spooned the substance into his mouth without relish, swallowed it, and was soon speaking again, about his plans to reprint the work of a once-popular poet



"I don't give a damn what's showing in Milan—you get a suit from Brooks Brothers."

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named Anna de Noailles—"who was born Anna de Brancovan, and was of Romanian descent, and who was one of the first women elected to the Académie in Belgium—not in France, because she died in 1933—and her poetry is stunning. . . ."

Finally, Lagerfeld stopped talking and agreed to give a tour of the house. After warning, "You will think I'm a madman," he led the way up a grand curving marble staircase. The second floor is composed of huge rooms with soaring ceilings, ornate plasterwork, wood panelling, and fifteen-foot-high mirrors. The furniture, a mixture of antique and modernist pieces, was almost impossible to see, hidden under hundreds of magazines, CDs, photographs, promotional brochures, and books, which lay in heaps spilling on every surface, including the floors. Scattered through the rooms were dozens of iPod nanos of every hue. Each one was loaded with songs that Lagerfeld listens to when designing his collections, which he does, he says, usually in the mornings, while dressed in a long white smock. Surveying the scene through his black glasses, Lagerfeld said serenely, "Normal people think I'm insane."

He spends most of his time in a thousand-square-foot room, at the center of which sat a modern fourposter bed. The posts were made of fluorescent bulbs, and a sable bedspread was strewn with paperbacks and magazines and more iPods. Lagerfeld says that he sleeps seven hours a night in this bed; he also spends considerable time lounging on it during his waking hours, reading and drawing. There was a large desk a few feet away, piled with papers, sketchbooks, magazines, books, newspapers, and art supplies. Lagerfeld complains that his desk kept getting "buried." To deal with the problem, he recently bought four more desks. They got buried, too. A Mac G5 computer was visible among the messy stacks of books and papers on a long table at the foot of his bed, but Lagerfeld insists that he rarely uses it and does not surf the Internet—partly because he is fearful of how it might compromise his privacy. "I don't want to be on the Internet," he said. "I hardly use a credit card—everything where you can be fixed. I'm floating. Nobody can catch me, mmm?"

He led the way into a room that had a huge table heaped with more books, CDs, DVDs, photographs, iPods, and magazines. "Look," he said, sounding a little amazed. "It goes on and on and on." He considered for a moment. "But I love it!" He claims to know where everything is, and it's not an idle boast. On several occasions during the afternoon, he disappeared into these rooms to fetch things, including a copy of the Colette novel "Mitsou," which provided the inspiration for a recent Chanel photo campaign that he had shot, and a copy of "The Emperor's New Clothes," which he had illustrated with paintings made entirely with cosmetics. He returned in minutes with the books.

"This is the room for the jeans, the shirts, the jewelry, the ties, the gloves, and things like this," he said, entering a narrow room lined with shelves. On the top of a bureau were perhaps two hundred pairs of fingerless gloves, arranged in neat piles according to color (he explained that he chose the gray pair he's wearing because of the overcast sky). There are also dozens of pairs of jeans, and belts laid out by the hundred. In a tray on another bureau were tangles of Chrome Hearts necklaces, rings, buckles, clasps, pins, brooches; on shelves below, scores of white shirts were stacked. Next door was a windowless room containing a dozen garment racks on wheels, each one stuffed with suits—perhaps five hundred in all—in black or gray hues. "I have suits here I've never worn," Lagerfeld said. "To normal people it may look sick, huh?" He shrugged. "I don't know what 'normal' means, anyway." He went into a room that looked like a bookstore stockroom during the Christmas season, and suddenly his attention was caught by a stack of dusty leather-bound tomes. "This is something I want to publish," he said, opening the book at the top of the stack. "This is the first German illustrated weekly paper, called the *Neue Berliner Illustrierte*. And thank God it was pre-

served, because very little survived. This is a complete set. I just found it in Germany."

In a small anteroom, amid more heaped books and magazines, was a black and red grand piano of sleek modernistic design. "I designed this for the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Steinway," Lagerfeld said. "I'm not very gifted as a piano player, so I'm giving it away as a Christmas gift." At the base of a small armchair were six plastic bags stuffed with folded papers. "These are newspapers I bought and haven't had time to read yet," he said. "I go through the most important, and the rest are unimportant things—they can wait."

For Lagerfeld, the value of all this information is less in the design ideas it might incite than as a hedge against his fear that he is slipping behind. Daily headlines, he says, "give the air of the moment. It is like music, which is like the coloration of the air. It puts you in a mood. It's for the attitude, for the feeling. That's why it's important." Lagerfeld is evasive about what inspires his work, but it's obvious that he adjusts not just his pen but his personality to whichever of the three fashion houses he is working for. In contrast to his designs for Chanel (which are fragile, poetic, and feminine) and Fendi (which have a kind of hard-edged extroversion), those for his Karl Lagerfeld line are often sombre, reflecting the gray skies and bleakness of rural northern Germany, where he grew up. For his fall-winter, 2006, Karl Lagerfeld and Lagerfeld Collection lines, he sent down the runway emaciated models in tattered shifts of brown, black, and gray—a grim display that prompted reviewers to use the word "post-apocalyptic." After the show, Lagerfeld gave an interview to Tim Blanks, of Style.com, in which he cited as influences on the collection Strindberg's plays, Munch's paintings, the stark tales of Isak Dinesen, and Ibsen's "A Doll's House." "We live in a dark and romantic and quite tragic world," Lagerfeld said. "So I think they are right for the moment, hmm?" Blanks asked, "Do you respond to current events that directly?" "You do it without knowing it," Lagerfeld replied. "I have the feeling this mood is in the air." (Lagerfeld's fall, 2007, collection, which he presented two weeks ago, in Paris, was similarly austere, featuring tailored pieces in dark colors paired with flat black boots.)

Perhaps the most revealing index to Lagerfeld's creative mind—to his insistence on keeping history alive even as he professes the need to forget it—was a room on the first floor at the end of a crooked hallway, which he saved for the end of his house tour. Here, Lagerfeld had reassembled his childhood bedroom, using the furniture and art that he had as a seven-year-old in Germany. Hanging on a wall just outside the bedroom was an oil painting that his mother gave to him when he was a boy, depicting Voltaire meeting Frederick the Great of Prussia: a group of eighteenth-century courtiers in velvet coats and powdered periwigs. "This is how I dreamed life should be," Lagerfeld said. "Can you imagine—at seven?"

Last September, Alicia Drake, a British fashion writer based in Paris, published a book titled "The Beautiful Fall," a chronicle of the fashion demimonde of Paris in the nineteen-seventies and of a bitter rivalry that arose between Lagerfeld and Yves Saint Laurent. The designers declined to talk to Drake, but she managed to interview Lagerfeld's eighty-nine-year-old cousin, Kurt, months before he died, as well as some friends, colleagues, mentors, and muses whom Lagerfeld has become estranged from over the decades: Anna Piaggi, a longtime contributor to Italian *Vogue;* Gilles Dufour, a former protégé and assistant for twenty-five years; Gaby Aghion, a former mentor and a co-founder of the label Chloé, where Lagerfeld worked for two decades; and the designer Paloma Picasso.

Drake argues that Lagerfeld was born, in Hamburg, not in 1938, as he has long claimed, but in 1933—a fact attested to by his cousin Kurt, a schoolmate, and a neighbor. Lagerfeld reacted to the book with rage. "It's the dirtiest thing in the world," he told me. "Everything is fixed; there's not one person I know well who talked—only people I had fired, or whom I hardly know, or who never existed." He sued Drake for invasion of privacy. (On January 15th, a French court dismissed Lagerfeld's suit, and he was ordered to pay Drake's legal fees.) Drake's book also includes admiring descriptions of Lagerfeld's designs and work ethic, but Lagerfeld was not appeased. "Maybe I don't want to seem hardworking!" he told me.

Lagerfeld's parents were cultured people whose idea of small talk was to debate the religious philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin over dinner. Christian Lagerfeld, his father, made a fortune in condensed milk; his mother, Elisabeth, played the violin. In the mid-thirties, as Hitler rose to power, Lagerfeld's father moved the family to an isolated country estate in northern Germany, where Karl, his older sister, and a half sister from his father's first marriage were raised. Lagerfeld has said that he knew nothing of the Nazis and the war; but, according to Drake's interviews with Kurt Lagerfeld (whose credibility Karl has challenged) and with neighbors of Karl's, the Lagerfeld family suffered severe deprivations. In a letter that Lagerfeld wrote to Drake, and which was quoted extensively in *Women's Wear Daily*, the designer refuted this characterization: "There was food all the time and [your] description of the end of the war is very romantic, but it was very different. . . . The farmers were not poor people with three cows." In a p.s., he added, "I felt loved and protected by my parents—in a time like the '40s when it was not easy to have a protected life."

As a boy, Lagerfeld read precociously, including "Das Nibelungenlied" and the letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz, also known as the Princess Palatine, a member of the court of Louis XIV. At school, he was a good student, but friendless. "I was too exotic for where I was," he told me. "I hated the company of other children. I wanted to be a grownup person, to be taken seriously. I hated the idea of childhood; I thought it was a moment of endless stupidity." He was devoted to his mother, who

Lagerfeld's Chanel show in Monte Carlo featured the handmade creations of the métiers d'art, on which the couture designers rely.

seemed rarely to miss an opportunity to criticize him. He has said that he decided never to smoke cigarettes after his mother told him that his hands were exceptionally ugly and that smoking would only draw attention to them; she also told him that his stories were "so boring" that he should hurry up and tell them—he says this accounts for his rapid speech. Lagerfeld recounts these instances of maternal cruelty without self-pity and even defends his mother, saying that children's stories are indeed boring. His mother was tough, he concedes, "but right for a boy with a head like this"—he throws his hands wide apart.

From an early age, he snipped pictures from fashion magazines and was "very critical" of the way his classmates dressed. But Lagerfeld's devotion to fashion also has an intellectual dimension. He is fascinated by the manner in which clothes reflect the times and attitudes of their wearers. He mentions a project conceived by Albert Kahn, an eccentric banker who lived in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. Kahn hoped to construct an "Archives of the Planet," and to that end dispatched photographers and filmmakers around the world to document, essentially, everything. At one point, according to Lagerfeld, Kahn set up a movie camera on a Paris street corner, and every day for ten years filmed people walking by. "You see the houses, you see the cars—and there were few changes in ten years," says Lagerfeld, who has viewed the footage. "The cars changed not that much. The architecture changed not at all. But the attitude of the people changed much more, in the way they walked, in the way they dressed. So don't tell me fashion is not important."

As a boy living in the country, Lagerfeld had little exposure to high fashion. He found a book on Paul Poiret, the French designer who, in 1906, created a line of unstructured clothes that liberated women from the corseted constraints of nineteenth-century dresses, but he did not attend a fashion show until he was in his early teens, after his family had moved back to Hamburg. There, in the early fifties, Lagerfeld saw a Christian Dior show and a Jacques Fath show. "I loved it—the mood, what it projected, the idea of a life," he says. "Because I spent my childhood thinking that I was born too late, that I had missed all this fabulous life before the war, the ocean liners, the Orient Express." Dreary postwar Hamburg was hardly the place to try to recreate such a life. "My idea was—and this is precise in my mind—'Let's get out of here,'" Lagerfeld says. His mother agreed, telling him, "Here, there is nothing for you to do. Germany is a dead country."

Lagerfeld moved to Paris while still in his teens. After he had been there for two years, he saw an advertisement for an international design competition sponsored by an organization called the International Wool Secretariat; he submitted sketches and fabric samples and won in the coat category, for a long overcoat with a high neckline and a plunging V-shaped opening in the back. (Yves Saint Laurent, then seventeen, won for a cocktail dress, and the two became friends.) Lagerfeld was immediately hired as a junior assistant at Balmain, the haute-couture house. The work was gruelling; for three weeks after each collection, Lagerfeld and the other assistants spent days sketching embroideries, flowers, seams, and silhouettes for pattern makers and buyers (photocopiers did not yet exist). "I thought the backstage atmosphere was terrible," Lagerfeld says. "But I said to myself, 'You're not here as an art critic, you're here to learn, so shut up and look.'" After six months, he was made apprentice to Pierre Balmain. But after three years he left—"because I wasn't born to be an assistant." For three years, he worked as artistic director at the House of Patou, where he produced couture collections in the style of the label's creator, Jean Patou. But by 1961 Lagerfeld had become impatient with designing formal, made-to-measure clothing for rich women. Couture, he says, "became very dowdy and very bourgeois and it was just not trendy." Lagerfeld decided that the most innovative ideas in fashion were in ready-to-wear, a branch of the industry long disdained by serious designers. He quit Patou, and hired himself out as a freelance ready-to-wear designer.

He was soon producing collections

THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT

I work the graveyard shift in a city of believers
hunched over a steel desk in a cone of light

facing a window with drawn blinds
beyond which the innocents are being slaughtered

in an enormous courtyard against all four walls
firing squads rotating around the clock

while masked men in the watchtowers
keep count in red ink on red pads

simultaneously recording and concealing
the numbers of dead

and nodding with each round of gunfire
mumbling praise to their leader

and his god whose righteousness and mercy
he mirrors while I keep to my work

with bowed head and unblinking eyes
sorting papers affixing stamps

having long ago given up trying
to stop my ears or black out my fear

my face burning not with shame but exhaustion
for I only sleep a few hours a night

and I eat once a day
cold scrapple and rice porridge

like a prisoner myself
in a cell that requires no bars or locks

unable to recognize my own handwriting
even when I've left myself a note

reminding me of who I once was but never
(anymore) what I might have been

which later I crumple and burn
in a standard-issue ashtray

the momentary lick of flame
no more or less remote to me than a star

—*Nicholas Christopher*

simultaneously for French, Italian, English, and German companies, including Chloé (where he became head designer), Krizia, Ballantyne, Cadette, Charles Jourdan, and Mario Valentino, where he was received as an exciting new talent, with a knack for capturing cultural trends and obsessions in his designs. Drake quotes Anne-Marie Muñoz, a fashion assistant who was a friend of Lagerfeld's at the time: "He designed shoes, bags, hair combs, blouses, pens, tables. . . . He was always flicking through books, passionate about a subject, interested, surrounded by paper." Lagerfeld also created wardrobes for movies, opera, and the theatre. In 1967, he added to his list of clients Fendi, a handbag and fur company based in Rome. "They hired him to do the fur," Joan Juliet Buck, a writer and the former editor of French *Vogue,* who at the time was a close friend, says. "And he throws out these unbelievable challenges: let's line fur in fur, let's knit fur, let's tear fur up, let's make holes in fur, let's paint on fur, let's paint on shearling. I remember when gold felt-tipped pens came out, suddenly everything in the Fendi collection had gold curlicues on it, as if he were indulging the pleasure of scribbling on clothes.'"

Two decades before it became de rigueur for designers to do so, Lagerfeld haunted flea markets and thrift shops for vintage dresses, dismantling them in order to learn the secrets of their construction and design. He studied books on Madeleine Vionnet and the other pioneers of fashion from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and he translated this knowledge into his work, pairing historical references with contemporary trends. Lagerfeld became a fixation of the fashion press, which chronicled his life and style, noting the changes in his home décor, and his habit of dressing in Edwardian collars and ascots, and wearing a monocle. When he moved into the house on the Rue de l'Université, in 1977, he did not use electricity in some of the rooms but lit them with candles. Buck visited him there. "It was extraordinarily beautiful," she says. "I slept in this bedroom with a *lit à la polonaise*, with a semicircular canopy—very high, with ostrich feathers on top. Next to that room was his study, and he slept in this tiny little room that had the actual lacquer furniture that had belonged to Mme. de Pompadour."

Lagerfeld was a conspicuous presence at parties in Paris and New York in the seventies, but he maintained a detached attitude, passing on the drugs and alcohol in which his colleagues indulged. "I observed it like an inside outsider," he says of the seventies bacchanal. "I have nothing against it, but I have one instinct stronger than any other thing in life, and that is the instinct for survival." In the early seventies, however, Lagerfeld fell in love with a witty and mischievous French aristocrat named Jacques de Bascher. Lagerfeld supported him financially, but they never lived together, and friends say that the union was—as Lagerfeld has always insisted—platonic, based on shared affinities for literature, clothing, and style. (De Bascher once told a journalist that Lagerfeld's sole loves were Coca-Cola and chocolate cake.) When de Bascher died of AIDS, in 1989, Lagerfeld was inconsolable; he sobbed when discussing him with a reporter for *Vanity Fair* in 1992. In his diet book, he says that his weight gain, which began in the late nineteen-eighties, was due to his despair over de Bascher's illness and death. Today, however, Lagerfeld insists that he is above such attachments, adopting the attitude he expressed in a conversation with *Interview* in 1975, in which he said, "I never fall in love. I am just in love with my job." In this way, Lagerfeld seems to be modelling himself on another prolific creator with a sense of the Zeitgeist, Andy Warhol. The two were friends; in the early seventies, Warhol cast Lagerfeld as an aristocratic German Lothario in a film called "L'Amour." "Not a masterpiece," says Lagerfeld, who discourages comparisons between himself and Warhol. "First of all, I'm better groomed. And, also, he pushed people. I never push people. There was something more perverted in his mind than in mine."

By the early nineteen-eighties, Lagerfeld had become one of the world's most respected and successful designers, though outside the fashion industry his name was not widely known, because, unlike other young designers, such as Pierre Cardin and Saint Laurent, he did not have his own label. "When people were shoving their names on everything, he said, 'I don't care about that,'" Joan Juliet Buck says. "He didn't believe in building his own empire. He liked the gun-for-hire thing." In 1982, Alain Wertheimer, the chairman of Chanel, approached Lagerfeld about designing for the label.

Coco Chanel had died eleven years earlier, and sales had declined sharply. By 1982, the label was little more than a perfume company with some clothing boutiques. The iconic Chanel suit—a tight-shouldered, boxy tweed jacket and matching knee-length skirt—was seen as a dowdy throwback for, as Buck put it, "middle-aged lady politicians in the provinces." Lagerfeld's friends advised him not to accept Wertheimer's offer. "Everybody said, 'Don't touch it, it's dead, it will never come back,'" Lagerfeld says. "But by then I thought it was a challenge." The job involved designing not only the Chanel ready-to-wear line but also the haute couture—an area in which Lagerfeld had not worked for twenty years. But he sensed that the culture was changing. "Ready-to-wear had become like a kind of fake couture," he says. "So I said, 'Let's do the real stuff.'"

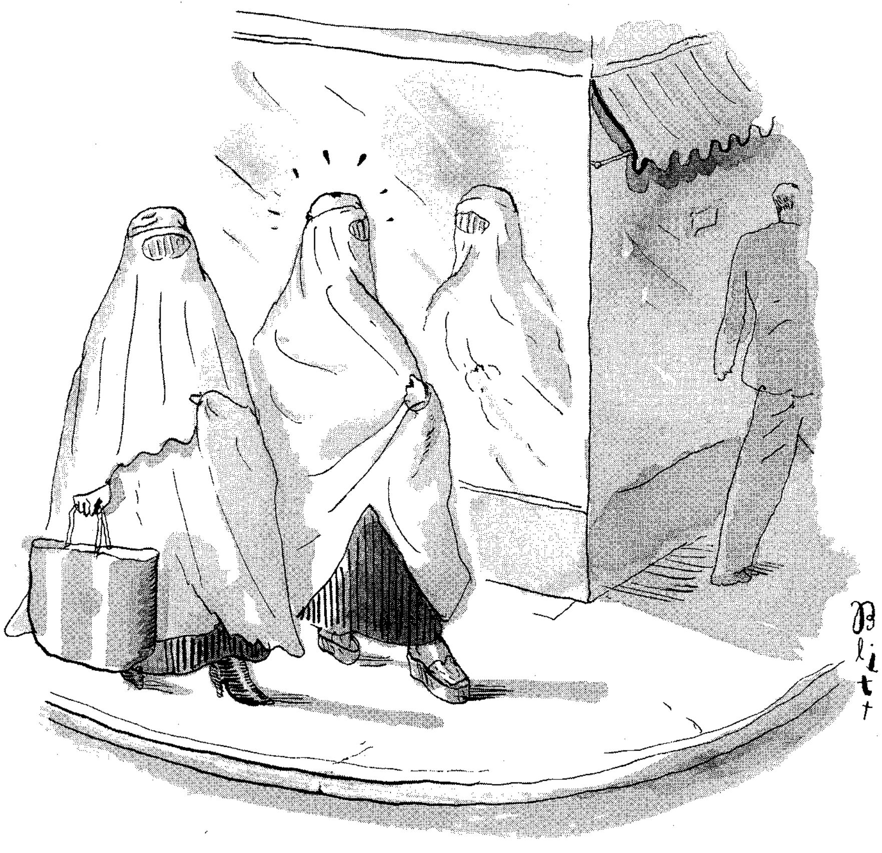
But the "real stuff" had also changed. "Before, fashion was easy, in a way," Lagerfeld says. "There was the couture collection—people were inspired by that, they copied it, and that was the fashion in the world. Now fashion comes from the street, from other designers, from ready-to-wear, so high fashion has to be the fashion of the moment." With these precepts in mind, Lagerfeld remade Chanel by acknowledging the brand's history but treating it with irreverence. He lampooned the Chanel suit, shrinking it into a micromini and a midriff-baring jacket; covering it with oversize double-C logos; and pairing it on the runway with quilted running shoes, sequinned hot pants, and giant neck chains inspired by rappers. In doing so, he erased any hint of bourgeois fustiness and created among the young, trendy, and moneyed a mania for the label.

Lagerfeld's bad-girl take was contrary to everything that Chanel herself had stood for: dignity, restraint, and a style of clothing that allowed women to dress in as confident and comfortable a manner as men do. Yves Saint Laurent told *Le Monde*, "At Chanel, they have chains everywhere, strips of leather. I see things that are frightening, sadomasochistic." Holly Brubach, writing in 1989 in this magazine, applauded Lagerfeld's creative energy but accused him of "desecrating the Chanel style with sight gags and overkill, with a tarty sex appeal and crass sensationalism."

Lagerfeld scoffs at such criticisms: "They said, 'Oh, Chanel would be shocked to death!' But they didn't want the homage—the respectful shit—either. So to survive you have to cut the roots to make new roots. Because fashion is about today. You can take an idea from the past, but, if you do it the way it was, no one wants it." Lagerfeld's success at revitalizing the Chanel brand inspired similar makeovers at other fashion houses, including Gucci (which hired Tom Ford), Dior (John Galliano), Louis Vuitton (Marc Jacobs), Lanvin (Alber Elbaz), Balenciaga (Nicolas Ghesquière), and Burberry (Christopher Bailey). "It's thanks to Karl and Chanel that all the other fashion companies realized that they could use the name of a dead person," Buck says. "He started the Lazarus movement."

Five days after the fitting at Chanel's Rue Cambon headquarters, Lagerfeld flew to Monte Carlo to prepare for the fashion show. He owns a house in Monaco and travels there often, primarily to see his friend Princess Caroline of Hanover, the daughter of Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier. Some two hundred of Lagerfeld's closest friends—artists, editors, photographers, models, actresses—and a large contingent of reporters also converged on Monaco for two days of events related to the Chanel fashion show.

The morning Lagerfeld arrived, he held a final fitting for the collection, which would be shown the next day on the stage of the Monte Carlo opera



"My God, I look exactly like my mother."

house, before an audience of more than four hundred and fifty people. At noon, he met with his assistants in the opera house's cramped basement to choose the accessories that the models would wear. After five hours, the assistants looked glazed and morose in the airless, overheated room, which was lit with harsh fluorescent lights. Lagerfeld, however, remained energetic, full of laughter and catty asides. "She's the toughest dyke of all," he muttered after a fierce-looking blond model had finished posing in front of him. He shouted instructions about the clothes to his assistants and helped select jewelry and shoes, while giving an interview to a reporter from *Women's Wear Daily*, who sat at his right elbow.

A few feet away, offering the occasional opinion about a necklace or a pair of earrings, was Amanda Harlech, a lithe, forty-seven-year-old with black hair and green eyes that slant upward. Since defecting, in 1997, from the camp of John Galliano, to whom she had played muse for a dozen years, Harlech has been fulfilling that role for Lagerfeld at Chanel. "She is an inspiration, because she wears the clothes I make, and she mixes them with other things and is very inventive herself," Lagerfeld says. "And she creates an atmosphere that is very important." Harlech says, "Officially, I'm the outside pair of eyes. The thing about Karl is that he is never happy with what he's done. However perfect that dress"—she gestures at a model wearing a black lace gown with a smattering of flowers and frayed tulle at the sleeves—"it already begs a question of the next thing. The moment the show opens, he's already foreseeing the actual set of the next one. This man never alights. He's on the wing. Photographs, buildings, collections, possessions."

Lagerfeld, who had been looking through a box filled with shoes, approached Harlech. He leaned in close and mumbled a joke about a mutual acquaintance who evidently suffered from "fat legs and bad breath." Harlech whooped with laughter and wagged a finger at him. Lagerfeld giggled, then turned a slow half-pirouette and returned to work.

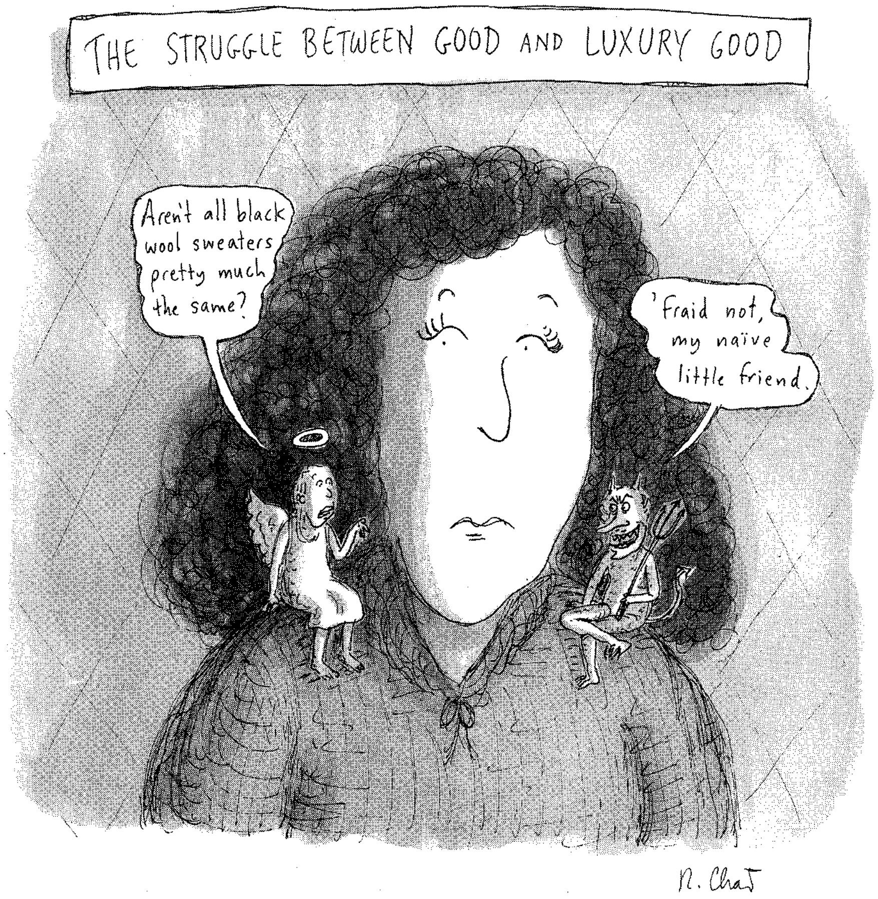
"I'm going to write a figure on this paper. You tell me if it looks like a turtle."

• •

Lagerfeld likes to foster envy and competitiveness among his retinue. "It would be too frightening, to start going inside that kingdom, the court, and all the *liaisons dangereuses*," the person who travels in Lagerfeld's circle but is not an intimate friend told me. "It's like Louis XIV." Everyone in his entourage knows the stories of former favorites who were summarily jettisoned, either for perceived slights and betrayals or because they had begun to bore Lagerfeld. This makes for an anxious atmosphere, as was clear that evening, when Lagerfeld hosted an informal dinner for Princess Caroline and a hundred or so friends. (A few fashion reporters were also invited.) The dinner was at Rampoldi, a small French-Italian restaurant that occupies a long, grotto-like space on Monaco's main commercial street. The guests—who included the co-founder and editor of the magazine *Purple Fashion*, Olivier Zahm, his face unshaven, his long, unwashed brown hair falling around his shoulders—reflected Lagerfeld's fascination with the Parisian hipsters from whom he draws ideas for his collections. Lagerfeld greeted Bidault-Waddington, the stylist, who is married to the British rock star Jarvis Cocker. Tall, slim, and doe-eyed, Bidault-Waddington, who has never styled for Lagerfeld, was under no illusions about the reason for her inclusion in Lagerfeld's entourage. "Basically, I'm good friends with them, and I like their stuff, and, because I'm funny, they invite me everywhere," she said. "For ambience, let's say." (The next day, Lagerfeld noticed the top-stitching on the pockets of her Chloé dress. "He said it was a special stitch, and he named it," Bidault-Waddington said later. "He looked at it like some kind of specialist—like a doctor. He analyzes everything in a second.")

Also present at Rampoldi was the rock musician Cat Power, whose real name is Chan Marshall. Lagerfeld met Marshall last year, outside the Mercer Hotel, in New York. She was dressed in her habitual combination of jeans, T-shirt, and boots, and was smoking a cigarette while slouched on a pile of her luggage. Lagerfeld was enchanted, telling her that only a true woman could get away with smoking like that. She is now a more or less constant presence at Lagerfeld's gatherings, flown to Chanel fashion shows and events, at the company's expense. (In January, Marshall and her band performed the music for the Chanel couture show at the Grand Palais, in Paris.)

The dinner was scheduled for eight-thirty, and by a quarter to nine most of the guests had arrived. But an hour later there was still no sign of Lagerfeld or Princess Caroline, and the mood was


THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND LUXURY GOOD
Aren't all black wool sweaters pretty much the same?
'Fraid not, my naïve little friend.

starting to sour. Lagerfeld is famous for keeping people waiting, sometimes because of work obligations but also sometimes for effect. Colombe Pringle, the editor of French *Vogue* from 1987 to 1994, who has known Lagerfeld for more than thirty years, strained in her seat to see the head table, where his and the Princess's chairs sat empty. Turning back to her tablemates, she said, "It's opera! They're building something! So everyone is wondering, Why isn't he here, it's 10 P.M.! " She laughed. "Karl is onstage." When Pringle was asked if she considered herself a friend of Lagerfeld's, she frowned. "You can never say you're a friend of Karl's," she said. "He can only say that about you." She lit a cigarette. "He's a diva."

Finally, Lagerfeld appeared with the Princess and her daughter Charlotte. He was in his usual white high-collared shirt, but he had traded his Dior suit for one by a young Japanese design team. His black jacket was a modern take on the eighteenth-century cutaway, with lapels that buttoned back and a slightly flaring tail. He did not remove his aviator sunglasses as he took his place at the head table with the Princess. Also with Lagerfeld was a wholesome-looking model named Brad Kroenig, from St. Louis, who is the subject of a book of photographs by Lagerfeld called "One Man Shown"; and Stephen Gan, a founding editor of the art magazine *Visionaire*. Gan is a member of Lagerfeld's innermost circle; backstage at fashion shows, Lagerfeld bestows on him the quick arm squeezes and whispered bon mots that he reserves for his closest confidants. Gan was shown to the table where Pringle was seated, and she demanded, "Where were you?" Gan said that he had joined Lagerfeld for cocktails. At this news, Gan's tablemates visibly stiffened. Over dinner, the talk was of Karl: his prodigious spending, his penchant for "getting rid of what he loves," his renunciation of sex.

At the end of the meal, a waiter materialized and, in full view of the forty or so other diners at the table, placed a small glass of Sauternes in front of Gan, saying, with a quick nod toward Lagerfeld, at the head table, that it was from "the gentleman." All eyes went from Lagerfeld—impassive behind his black shades—to the glass of Sauternes, which seemed to cower on the tablecloth. Gan smiled sheepishly before taking a sip.

At a few minutes past midnight, Lagerfeld, Caroline, and Charlotte stood and began to walk toward the door. The other guests crowded after them. Lagerfeld lingered on the sidewalk outside for twenty minutes, saying goodbye to the Princess and her daughter, as they stood by the open door of a stretch limousine. Several feet away, a small group of Lagerfeld's friends waited, among them Harlech, Gan, Bidault-Waddington, and Zahm. Royal protocol dictated that the guests should not approach or speak to the Princess without an invitation to do so.

"Look at that schmooze!" a dark-haired woman said under her breath, as Lagerfeld and the Princess spoke animatedly to each other.

"What do you think they're saying?" her companion asked.

She popped her lips as if to imply that the answer couldn't be more obvious. "Telling each other how marvellous they are!" she said.

Ten minutes later, Lagerfeld had seen the Princess off and returned to his friends. He approached the dark-haired woman, who smiled radiantly, accepted Lagerfeld's air kisses, and told him that he looked marvellous.

At ten-thirty the next morning, Lagerfeld arrived at the crowded backstage area of the Monte Carlo opera house, where the fashion show was to begin thirty minutes later. He looked rested, even though he had been up until 4 A.M., drinking Coke Max and chatting with Gan, Kroenig, and Harlech, and a few others from Chanel—all of whom, despite being several decades younger than Lagerfeld, looked distinctly the worse for wear. In the theatre's basement, a dozen silent, waxen-faced models were draped over the furniture in attitudes of apparent exhaustion, casting wistful looks at a buffet table, across the room. Finally, one model approached the table. She selected a single grape from a bunch, inspected it carefully, and ate it.

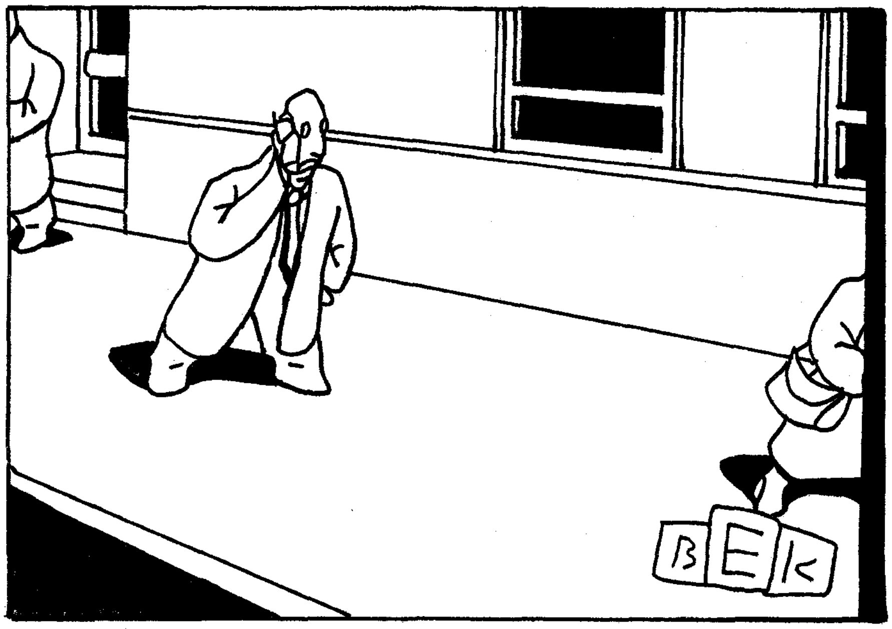
Lagerfeld swept by, waggled his fingers at the models by way of a greeting, and proceeded to a corner of the room, where a makeup artist was brushing powder over a girl's face—executing in foundation, rouge, mascara, and lipstick Lagerfeld's directive to evoke both Audrey Hepburn and the Ballets Russes. Then Lagerfeld, followed by five or six assistants, climbed a short, unlit staircase, hurried through a maze of scrims, and emerged onto the stage. Through the closed velvet stage curtain, he could hear the guests taking their seats on the other side. Someone asked him how he felt. His face, behind his dark glasses, did not change. "I have no human feelings," he replied. He moved to the wings, where he could give a final tweak to the clothes before the models went onstage.

In the meantime, Princess Caroline had arrived, and, in a break with tradition, had seated herself not in the royal box, at the back of the theatre, but in the front row, the better to see Lagerfeld's creations. The curtain went up, and for twenty minutes the models paced the stage in Lagerfeld's latest take on the Chanel lady-who-lunches, this time with references to Diaghilev: short skirts in a black-and-white harlequin pattern of sequins, jersey knit dresses with plunging necklines, and a pink gauzy dress trailing pompoms of tulle that suggested a fancy poodle. (The actress Rinko Kikuchi, from "Babel," wore the dress a few weeks later at the Golden Globe Awards.) In keeping with the objective of highlighting the work of the ateliers, several garments were encrusted with embroidery, beads, sequins, and jewelry. There was lots of tulle. ("If you want to create allure, veil it," Lagerfeld told a reporter afterward.)

The rococo theatre lacked a central runway; the models were confined within the proscenium arch, where they paced back and forth a few times before exiting stage left or stage right. This constraint, coupled with a muffled soundtrack that mixed classical music with snippets of throbbing Euro-techno dance beats, made for a show strangely lacking in heat and excitement. When Lagerfeld appeared under the lights for his bow, there was only one cry of "*À bon*, Karl!" and the applause was polite. Lagerfeld seemed indifferent to the crowd's reaction. As the audience filed out, he was mobbed by television reporters and for nearly an hour answered questions in three languages. ("When a woman is getting up in the morning, and gets dressed, and puts on her favorite Chanel, what should be her attitude?")

Finally, Lagerfeld departed for the Hôtel de Paris, across the street, where a large lunch reception was in full swing. He stuck close by the Princess, making small talk for several hours with a stream of wealthy-looking older men and women. He left briefly, to change clothes, and was back at the opera house by early evening, to attend the Nijinsky Awards gala, a biennial event, presided over by Princess Caroline, that celebrates the achievements of choreographers and dancers. Lagerfeld took the stage to praise the honorees, then sat in the audience to watch two long dance performances. Afterward, he accompanied the Princess and his entourage to an opulent room at the Hôtel de Paris, where he attended a black-tie dinner for four hundred. At midnight, many of the guests, now at the end of a second day of non-stop socializing, disappeared to their rooms.

Lagerfeld, however, was brimming with energy. Commandeering a grand carpeted staircase at the hotel, he directed his assistants to set up a portable photography studio, which included a Mac laptop, lights, and an array of digital cameras. He proceeded to take photographs of the Princess, Charlotte, her brother Andrea, the Nijinsky Award winners, his assistants, and any other member of his retinue who was still standing. Wielding a large black camera, he directed his subjects to pose this way and that, reaching over to adjust an arm or a leg. He took photographs the way he sketches: fast—popping off shots, then diving over to the laptop to see the results on the screen. "It's not bad, *non*?" he would announce, before racing back to his subject to shoot another round of pictures. By 3 A.M., the large group of people on the stairs had dwindled to twenty or so. The two men working the computer hung their heads and rubbed their eyes, yawning, and slumped in their folding chairs. Amanda Harlech, in a navy-blue Chanel gown of tiered ruffles, waved away a waiter who had materialized with a tray of champagne and said she was about to collapse. Lagerfeld, unaware, or uninterested, hurried over and told her to get under the lights and pose, which she did without complaint. By 4 A.M., even the most concerted night owls could take it no more. Olivier Zahm, his hair falling over his tinted sunglasses, a chewed half-smoked cigar hanging from his mouth, and a glass of flat champagne in his hand, stumbled across the lobby to his room. Behind him, Lagerfeld's camera continued to snap away. ♦



"I have this fantasy of everyone else in my life reinventing themselves."

A REPORTER AT LARGE

BAG MAN

Cracking down on fashion fakes.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

"What we do has been well honed over the years. People can get incendiary and you try to keep a lid on that. You do it in the first ten minutes you walk in the door. Take my lead. If there are decisions to be made, I'll make them. When the door opens, the cop will say, 'This is Mr. Harley Lewin, he's here to serve some papers.' I will explain, in the tone of voice that you're listening to right now, that this is very serious, that they can make it hard or they can make it easy, and the easy way is to show us where we need to go. We'll look anyway, but that gives them some sense of control. You're rummaging through their home, and people in their own homes get very protective, very emotional.

"When you do the search, everything is left as you find it. Nothing is disturbed, nothing is dumped. I have a camera with me, and before anybody moves we take a picture of the place, and we take a picture of the place when we leave. We request, firmly, that they don't make phone calls unless they're calling an attorney. We don't raise our voices. Everybody's addressed 'Mr.' and 'sir' and 'Thank you.' Asians respect authority and get real quiet on you, so you can feel full of power if you're not careful. The room will become crowded with bodies and that usually suffices to keep the peace. There are occasions when people will start to freak out. In that case, you call me and I'll take them aside and calm them down. If we play good guy, bad guy you'll see me get a little nutty. If there's any joking to be done, it will be done for a purpose. The last thing is: *Do not let the cop go.* There have been times in the past where everybody waits till the cop leaves and then the thing goes bang. Right, Ter?"

"Yes, sir," Terry said.

"Things have a way of deteriorating. Somebody might come home and change the emotional balance. Know who's there. Know everybody in the place and always know where they are. If there are kids, where are the kids? Because parents beget trouble. They want to protect the house and the kitchen's full of weapons. Every now and then, Caspar Milquetoast will turn into Superman. It's a bad thing when it happens. I've had a guy pull the master switch in a warehouse in New Jersey and kill everything, pitch black. One of the uniforms finds the switch, turns it back on, and there's a guy with a hammer in one hand and a wrench in the other. Turns out he'd done some hard time. So those are the rules of the game."

Harley Lewin had flown into Atlanta at dawn. It was a hot, hot morning. He wore cotton and clogs. The name of the game that day was Hermès handbags. He had reason to believe that the man whose house he was going to raid imported counterfeit bags from China and sold them on the Internet; he had been hired by Hermès to stop him. Harley is a lawyer who protects trademarks. He works for Greenberg Traurig. When a company has a counterfeiting problem, he tracks down the bad guys and sues them.

Harley was going to raid the house with two of his private investigators, Terry and Matt, and two lawyers, Gail and Jim. They would rendezvous with the cop on the way. Harley had had the raidee's bank accounts frozen so that he wouldn't be able to hide his money when he realized what was going on. Jim and Harley drove to meet the cop.

"We did a gig here in Atlanta once, in the stadium," Harley said, reminiscing. Harley started out as a lawyer for an agency that booked rock bands. "I was working the box office. Now it's all charge cards, but back then it was five-dollar bills, ten-dollar bills. We're staying at a cheap motel nearby and I have a hundred grand in cash I'm gonna bring back to New York. All I wanna do is get the hell out of town. I don't like leaving that kind of money in a safe so I sleep on it. I get to New York, I count the money, I'm ten grand light. Now, twenty-five years ago? Ten grand's a lot of money. I call the motel and I say, 'I gotta trust you, I need you to go check under my mattress and see if there's ten thousand dollars wrapped in rubber bands.' And he gets back on the phone and says, 'Mr. Lewin, you're lucky I'm an honest man.'"

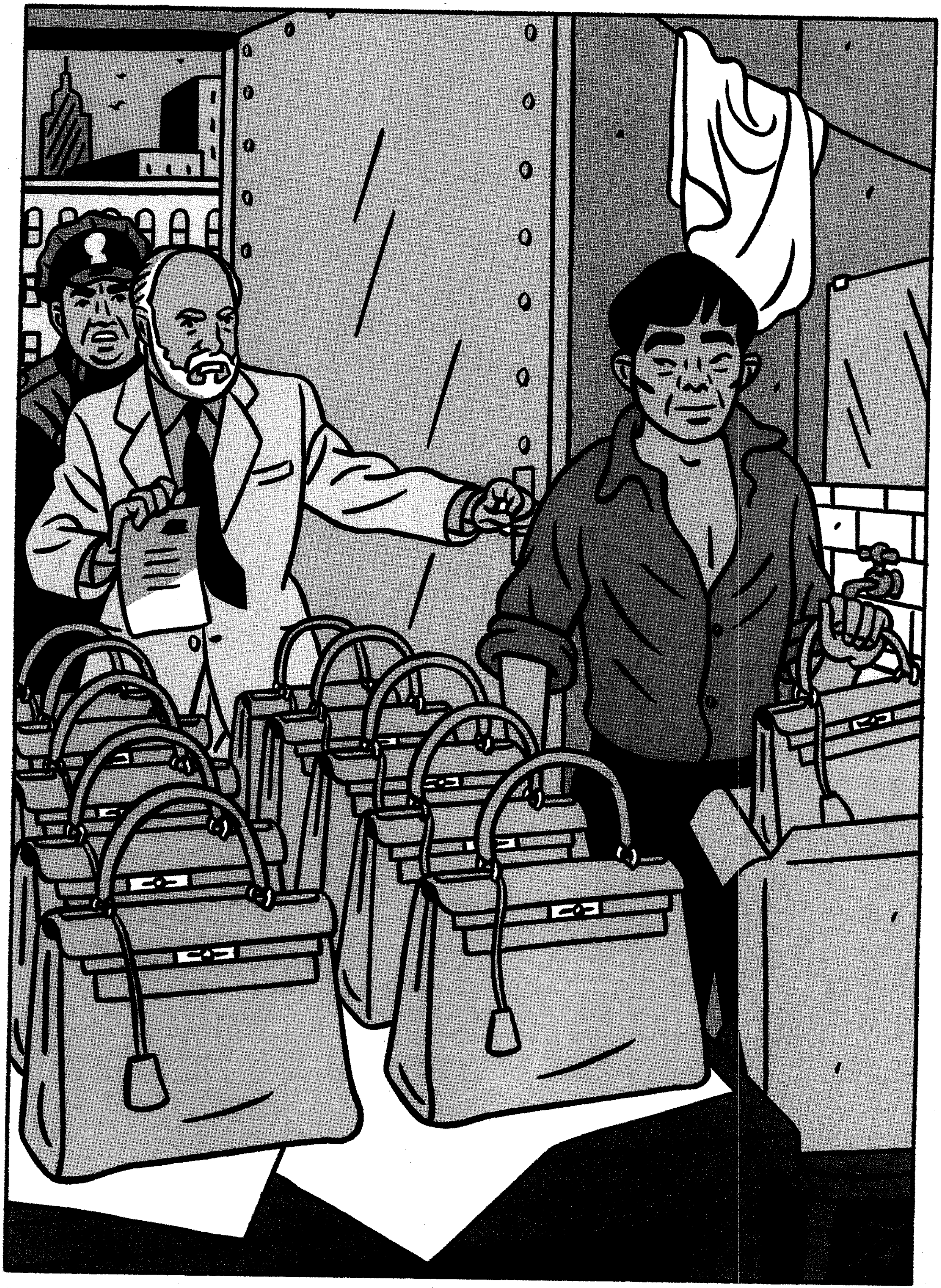
Harley looked out the window.

"We used to do terrible things when I was in the rock-and-roll business," he said. "I helped Rod Stewart take an entire Holiday Inn room out of the hotel in the middle of the night and move it to the pool. We made the bed and put the TV there—the whole room. I got real friendly with ZZ Top. I did their tours with them for years and years. I wonder what happened to all those guys."

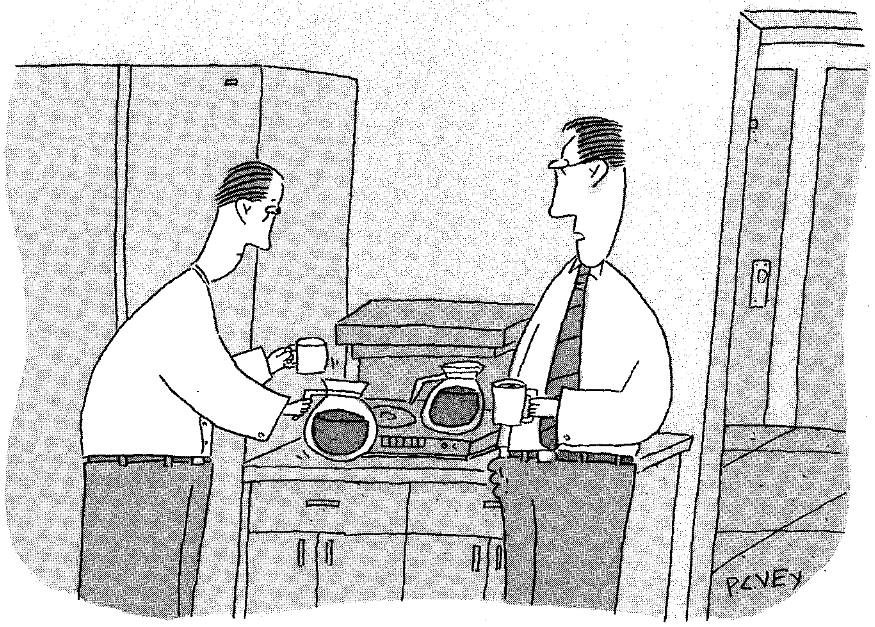
"They got older," Jim said.

The cop was waiting in the parking lot of a Citgo station near the raid site. He was brawny, bald, and tanned and had a thick blond mustache. He stood with his hands on his hips. He stared at Harley. Harley looked up at his sunglasses. Getting the cop on board was part of the process. Every raid, same thing: the cop was always suspicious of a situation where he was supposed to follow the lead of a civilian, and he never understood what he was supposed to be doing—there was a crime involved, but he wasn't there to arrest the criminal, and somehow a lawyer had obtained a warrant to break into somebody's house and take his stuff. (That cops were confused wasn't surprising. When Harley was starting out, it was difficult even to persuade a judge that filing for a search-and-seizure order ex parte—without giving the bad guys any notice—was justified in a civil case, as it was in a criminal case, but then the 1984 Trade-

FLOCH



"Counterfeiting," the lawyer Harley Lewin likes to say, "is more profitable than narcotics, and your partners don't kill you."



"If I switched to decaf, I'd lose my edge around the water cooler."

• •

mark Counterfeiting Law was passed, codifying it. The idea was that without the element of surprise a counterfeiter would be likely to destroy evidence and hide funds that might be drawn upon for damages.) The fact was, Harley would love his bad guys to get arrested, but usually, when he explained the situation, the cop figured it wasn't worth his while, because the case would go nowhere. No matter how dastardly a ring of thieves Harley rounded up, mostly he ended up suing them in civil court: it was hard to get a prosecutor interested in a fight with so little evil glamour and so little jail time, especially since 9/11. "Every time I call an I.R.S. agent now I'll say, 'Do you want another case?' and they'll say, 'I'd love to, Harley, but I'm going out to Hardee's because we got a call that they saw Osama bin Laden eating a roast-beef sandwich.' "

The raid site was a narrow condominium on top of a garage, attached to several others just like it, each with a small square of garden out front. The door was opened by a Chinese man about thirty years old wearing a red Izod shirt, blue Adidas shorts, and no shoes. His face was square. His hair was short. He looked as if he'd just woken up.

"We're from Hermès, you know, the handbags," Harley said, talking slowly in case the man didn't speak English or was planning to pretend that he didn't speak English. "This is a complaint. You are being sued. Not criminal court—money damages for selling counterfeit Hermès bags. If you don't want to go to court, call me, we can save everybody a lot of time and money. Where you from, sir?"

"I'm from China."

"Where?"

"From Chengdu."

"Chengdu. I was there two weeks ago. Nice city. Now show us where you work. We want all the business records, all the buys, all the sales, all the e-mails."

"O.K., let me get them."

"No, no! We'll go with you."

"I want you to listen to me," the cop said to the man. "I can handcuff you and sit you downstairs while we do this or you can help us. You coöperate and I won't get involved, fair enough?"

"O.K."

"Atta boy."

The house was very new. Each room was painted in a different earth tone. In the living room there was an extremely large television and some stereo equipment. Harley left the service papers in the kitchen, near three jumbo pots of protein powder. In the bedroom there was an unmade futon, a few socks on the floor, a laundry basket, and a dresser. Harley went through the dresser, checking for weapons. On the third floor was a white-carpeted room that the man was using as an office. Among the papers strewn on the carpet were several accounting textbooks and a binder from a management college. The man was in the country legally, on a work visa. In addition to running his handbag business, he was working as an accountant at what appeared to be a legitimate company, earning fifty thousand dollars a year. Harley sat down at the computer.

"Don't worry, I'm not interested in your personal things," he said. "Open up your file list. All right, I just saw a picture of a bag. Stop, please. Stop! We're gonna take this computer."

"O.K."

"Don't get upset. We're gonna make a copy of the hard drive and we're gonna return the computer to you."

"O.K."

The man stood behind the desk with no expression on his face, his hands clasped behind his back. Every now and again, he twitched toward the computer but restrained himself.

"Nobody does this better than me," Harley said as he clicked through the files. "Well, sir, you're just in a shit pile full of trouble, as they say."

"O.K."

"This is your cell phone, right?"

"Yes."

"Show me the list of telephone numbers that you call."

"Can you please not call my friends?"

"We're not gonna call your friends."

Terry was down in the garage. He found some apparently fake Tiffany jewelry, Dooney & Burke bags, Hermès bags, several rolls of pink crocodile leather, and a silver Porsche Boxster, gloriously real.

"Who owns the Porsche downstairs?" Harley asked the man.

"Oh, that's my friend's."

"What car do you drive, sir?"

"Honda."

"O.K. Is the glove box to the car open or closed?"

"Huh?"

"Is the glove box to your car, you know, the Porsche downstairs that you don't own."

"You want me to open? O.K."

Down in the garage, Harley went through the Porsche and discovered a tennis racquet, two cartons of tennis balls, and, in the glove compartment, papers showing that the man owned the car.

"Boy, you are a liar, aren't you, sir?" Harley said.

"O.K., yeah, I lied about the car."

Terry and Jim, their shirts soaked through with sweat from carrying boxes around in the heat, were sorting the haul into piles in the driveway. Matt tagged the evidence with labels. Harley came out of the house, cool from the air-conditioning, and snapped a few photos of the loot to show his client.

"We're done," Harley said to the man. "If you don't want to appear in court, we'll talk tomorrow. What's very important is that you don't tell anyone that we've been here. If you do, if you keep lying to me, I'll come back and I'll be your worst nightmare come true. So no talk to China. This will stay between you and me if you behave yourself. And you better start putting together some money because I'm gonna want some money from you."

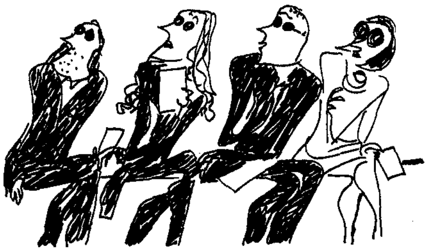
"O.K."

"Counterfeiting," Harley likes to say, "is more profitable than narcotics, and your partners don't kill you." You can import a counterfeit watch from China for a dollar-sixty and sell it on Canal Street for thirty dollars or on the Internet for a hundred and fifty. "There ain't no markup like that in narcotics, not ever," Harley says. "And in narcotics if you get caught you go to jail for the rest of your life. If you get caught counterfeiting, you go to jail for three months. Not even." For an anti-counterfeiting guy, there is never a shortage of work—practically everything is counterfeited. Harley has investigated counterfeit vodka and counterfeit golf balls. He has seen a package of counterfeit prunes. There is counterfeit toothpaste and counterfeit breakfast cereal, and there are counterfeit truck parts (air dryers filled with kitty litter), counterfeit airplane parts (two per cent of the parts installed each year), and counterfeit pharmaceuticals (ten per cent). A Chinese company published a counterfeit novel, "Harry Potter and the Leopard Walk-Up-to-Dragon." Counterfeiting is everywhere, and Harley knows people, he says—informants, investigators, cops, prosecutors, judges—in Indonesia, Malaysia, most of South Africa, most of North Africa, all of Europe, all of Latin America, and most of the Pacific Rim.

That was one of the reasons he got into counterfeiting in the first place—the travel. He was already travelling in the music business: he spent the seventies on the road, putting out fires and breaking up fights. He was in charge of running interference for the Ozzy Osbourne tour the year after Osbourne bit the head off a live bat onstage. The tour was supposed to start off in Scranton, Pennsylvania, but rumors spread that Osbourne had taken to strangling puppies, and the venue, a Catholic youth center, cancelled just before the show, so Harley filed an emergency lawsuit to save the date. (He lost.)

It was Judas Priest that got him into the counterfeiting game. The company that the group had licensed to sell T-shirts and memorabilia on its tours decided it was sick of chasing down all the illegal venders that sprang up everywhere the group went, so it asked Harley if there was anything he could do. Harley went to court in New York, he says, and got a judge to give him a nationwide John Doe restraining order that enjoined unauthorized dealers from selling counterfeit goods near the concert. In the early eighties, he decided to quit the booking agency and go into regular lawyering full-time. "I was so strung out I chewed a pencil in half," he says. "I was on the road with Bob Seger's band. I had a hundred-something-degree fever, and I woke up one day and did not know what city I was in, I did not know who was next to me, I did not know how she got there, I didn't know if she was a she, and I said, If I don't get off the road I'm gonna die."

Harley rented an office with a partner at Fifty-seventh and Broadway, which was a pretty seedy part of town in those days. He didn't have a lot of clients, so when anyone came over he would get a friend to take a roll of dimes to a pay phone and call the office, to make him look busy. Some companies would loan you copy machines or computers for ninety days on trial, and Harley pursued these offers to make his quarters look well equipped. He tried to meet his clients out of the office, because it was embarrassing, though some of his clients back then weren't too picky. He represented a man known as Eugenio Perente-Ramos, who was either an organizer of farm laborers or the leader of an armed Brooklyn Communist cult or both. He did some work for a guy named Joey who was a bagman for the Mob. One day, though, the in-house counsel for his biggest client insisted on paying a visit. The in-house counsel was a Wellesley graduate, she wasn't Jewish, she wasn't from New York, and Harley figured that if she saw him in his natural environment he would be, he said to his partner, in just a shit pile of trouble. After panicking for a bit, Harley came up with a solution: he and his partner went over to a lumber yard, bought a hundred dollars' worth of leftover planks and sawdust, and spread them over the office. When the in-house counsel arrived, they told her that they were under construction, it was impossible to meet there, and they should go out to lunch.



Around the same time, just before he split up with his first wife, Harley was sitting by a swimming pool, or maybe it was on a porch, with his soon-to-be-ex-brother-in-law, who had taken a job with a little company named Reebok. Reebok's U.S. operation at that point consisted of about three people, but it was already having problems with counterfeit T-shirts. Harley did O.K. tracking down the T-shirts, so the company came to him with a white leather shoe that had a little window with "Reebok" in it and a stripe on one side. They'd been seeing nearly identical shoes pop up all over the place. The trouble was, back then nearly identical wasn't good enough for the law. Harley would show a judge an otherwise indistinguishable shoe named "Reebek" or "Reebuk" or "Roobok" and the judge would turn him down. This was before the Nike swoosh became really big, before it became obvious that logos and over-all look were as essential to a brand as its name. Even brands weren't as important then, so

Einstein
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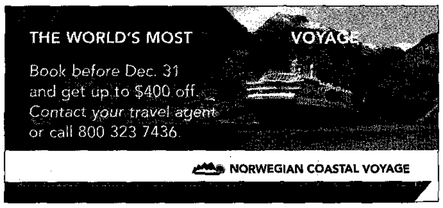

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counterfeiting wasn't, either—the world market in counterfeit goods in the mid-eighties was only a hundredth the size that it is now.

When Harley first started working for Reebok, he began looking around for investigators to work with, but most of them were charlatans. Then he heard about a guy named Jim Perrone, a former N.Y.P.D. officer who'd set up shop in North Carolina. At the time, North Carolina was a big textile area, and a lot of the counterfeit shirts and socks were coming from there. This was before everything came from China. Jim Perrone would shop the flea markets and track down the suppliers, then he and Harley would do raids in the back country—red clay roads, tiny shacks, hog in the yard.

A few years later, Reebok told Harley that it was having sneaker problems down at the border. Counterfeit shoes had been showing up all over Arizona and Texas and Southern California and the company had decided the problem was Mexico. "Conventional wisdom was you didn't go near Mexico," Harley says. "It was dangerous, it was drugs, it was corruption. I, of course, didn't know that." After some nosing around, he figured out that something like half the counterfeit shoes in Mexico could be traced to a guy named Byron McLaughlin, who lived just over the border in a suburb of San Diego. Byron McLaughlin had been a major-league baseball player in the seventies and early eighties—he had pitched for the Seattle Mariners—but in the mid-eighties his career foundered and he started playing in the Mexican leagues. He made a deal with a couple of Korean companies to manufacture cheap counterfeit sneakers—Reebok, Converse, Vans, Adidas—for the Mexican market. By the time Harley caught up with him, his business was booming: in a good month he would sell around eighty thousand pairs of sneakers for about three-quarters of a million dollars. (As *Footwear News* reported, McLaughlin pleaded guilty to money-laundering charges but fled the country before sentencing and is believed to be living near Cannes.)

Around the same time, Harley and Jim Perrone began looking into the counterfeiters' bazaar along the Avenida Revolución in Tijuana. It turned out that most of the supply was controlled by a man named Nathan Betech. Betech, Harley learned, would import counterfeit sneakers from Korea, mix them together with genuine product, and ship them out at retail prices. Harley suspected that Betech was very powerful in the area, that he had the police and judges all sewn up, and Harley knew that Mexico could be a pretty scary place at the best of times, so he and Jim spent six months persuading police in Mexico City to send a special unit to supervise the raid.

The day of the raid, Jim Perrone played the gringo buyer, riding in a limo driven by the head cop. Harley spent the day crouching in the back of an un-air-conditioned Chevy Suburban, surrounded by guns, while he and the other policemen waited for night. Around one in the morning, they raided the warehouse and captured about thirty thousand pairs of sneakers, along with Betech, who was sped away to the airport—the police were afraid that his men might attack if they stuck around.

It was freezing in midtown and Harley was headed to Queens to do a bracing on a Chinese woman who was a small-time retailer of counterfeit dresses. "Bracing" was an old expression that Harley liked to use—it involved him and several other people, preferably large and scary men, confronting a seller in her place of business. The idea was to frighten her into quitting and giving up information—you braced someone who was too small to sue. Bracings had about a fifty per cent success rate: amateurs collapsed, tougher sellers told him to go fuck himself.

That morning, Harley had got up at five, as usual, and since he had an hour and a half to kill before his yoga class he decided to drive to Albany and back. Well, not quite to Albany. He had recently purchased a Corvette Z06, one of the fastest cars on the road. Twelve years ago, he took classes in race-car driving at a track near Allentown, Pennsylvania, and now he liked to race his Corvette late at night or early in the morning, when the roads were empty.

He asked around the office, looking for people to come on the raid with him, and settled on Cindy, a young associate. Cindy had herself recently moved from

THE TEAM OF WORKHORSES

The two workhorses come in from the field.
They stand at the tank, horse collars still on.
Their coltishness remains tangled in their rumpled manes.

They offer, generously, to do all the work.
They rarely look back over their shoulders. Their long
Eyelashes are girlish, and their foreheads, blunt

To the wind, say, "We might change our minds right now."
Their eyes flare like children's. They are easily startled
And are as changeable as cottonwoods in wind.

They might gallop this minute five miles up the canyon.
Their extravagant ears, stuffed with hair, turn so
Swiftly to absorb a splash, a thundercrack, a rock

Falling, guiding knowledge directly into the brain.
I think we are less safe now than our grandparents
Were when horses turned their faces to look at them.

—*Robert Bly*

China, and for several months had pursued a position in Harley's group with a tenacity that at first aggravated and then awed him. She was fiercely dedicated to her work.

"If this woman has good information, she'll pay attention to us if we stand in front of her face," Harley explained. "She won't if we write a letter. That's what this is about."

"I can understand," Cindy said slowly.

"It's a very un-Chinese thing to do, to confront people," Harley said.

Cindy nodded and looked grave. "I can learn to do that," she said.

The house they were looking for was far out in Flushing, past the last subway stop on the 7. It was a cramped, rundown two-story house with bars on the windows. A Chinese man was standing in the driveway. Harley asked if the woman was home. The man stared at him. Harley asked Cindy to translate.

"I'm an attorney," Harley said. "I protect trademarks. The lady has been selling eBay fake goods. We need to talk to her to avoid litigation."

"He said that she's his tenant," Cindy said. "She's out."

"Ask him if we can come inside," Harley said, rubbing his arms to show that he was interested only in escaping the cold. The man led them around to the back of the house. A door opened onto a dingy, congested room lit by a small window. The room contained several broken-down chairs, many pairs of old shoes, a collection of cleaning products, an ancient scale, two mousetraps, a heap of clothes and scarves in one corner, and a large fish tank in which a few small orange fish were swimming. It looked like somebody was spending a lot of time there—there was a television with a couple of DVDs ("Free Willy" and "E.T."), the remains of a takeout meal on a table, and a small garbage can half filled with cigarette butts, takeout containers, and chopsticks.

Harley began poking around. He'd noticed that there wasn't a computer, but maybe the woman worked off a laptop she kept with her. There also didn't seem to be any UPS forms, which suggested that she had her suppliers ship directly from China to her customers. He peered over the pile of clothes in the corner and saw that what seemed to be a closet was in fact another room, bigger than the first. He could see tall piles of cardboard boxes, metal clothing racks hung with clothes wrapped in plastic, and a dressmaker's dummy.

"Holy cow," he said. He turned to Cindy. "Tell him to tell her that if she wants to avoid trouble, she will call us," he said. "The next time we come back it will not be to talk."

Having seen the squalor she lived in, Harley was no longer interested in trying to get damages out of the woman. What he wanted was her contacts. She looked pretty small-time, and she certainly lived way the hell out in Flushing, but it was always possible that she was connected in Chinatown.

Harley spent a lot of time in Chinatown. Raiding Canal Street he'd discovered doors behind the storefronts which led to workshops where thousands of counterfeit watches and bags were assembled and stored. There were all sorts of undocumented changes in the buildings—basements within basements, stairs leading to corridors leading to more doors and more stairs, underground passages connecting buildings that looked separate on the street. His biggest case to date, the Nu Be Quan case, had been in Chinatown: in a 2003 suit, he won Richemont (which owns Cartier) a default judgment of nearly six hundred million dollars. Harley and his investigators spent years turning up all they could about Nu Be Quan. "I can tell you what medicine she takes," Harley says. "I can tell you what food she ate yesterday."

Nu Be Quan was a widow, half Chinese, half Vietnamese. Her husband had run a counterfeit-watch business in the eighties, Harley says—he was one of the big men on Canal Street immigrants went to for work when they arrived—and after he died she took over. She imported her product through a relative of hers known as Uncle Van, who lived in Hong Kong. The works of the watches were made in the Philippines, the bands in Singapore, the bodies in China; the parts were assembled in China; and then the watches were shipped to America. In order to avoid trouble at the ports, Nu Be Quan often imported watches that had the bodies of designer watches but not the labels—"blanks." Then her workers would exchange the plain face for one with a name on it.

The trail that Harley followed to Nu Be Quan began with small-fry out-of-town dealers. In Texas, Harley and his investigator, George Arnold (Jim Perrone had left the business to breed racehorses), staged a raid on the house of a fat guy named Jerry, thirty years old, who had gone back to college and was living with his mother. Jerry was out when they first arrived, and his mother let them in. Harley found a loaded gun in Jerry's sock drawer, and the cop found a stack of one-ounce bags of pot in his closet. Jerry came home and found them there. He got very upset. He sat down at the dining-room table and said, "Oh God, oh God, oh God," over and over again. He began to hyperventilate and sweat so much that Harley thought he might be having a heart attack and tried to calm him down so he wouldn't die before he was arrested.

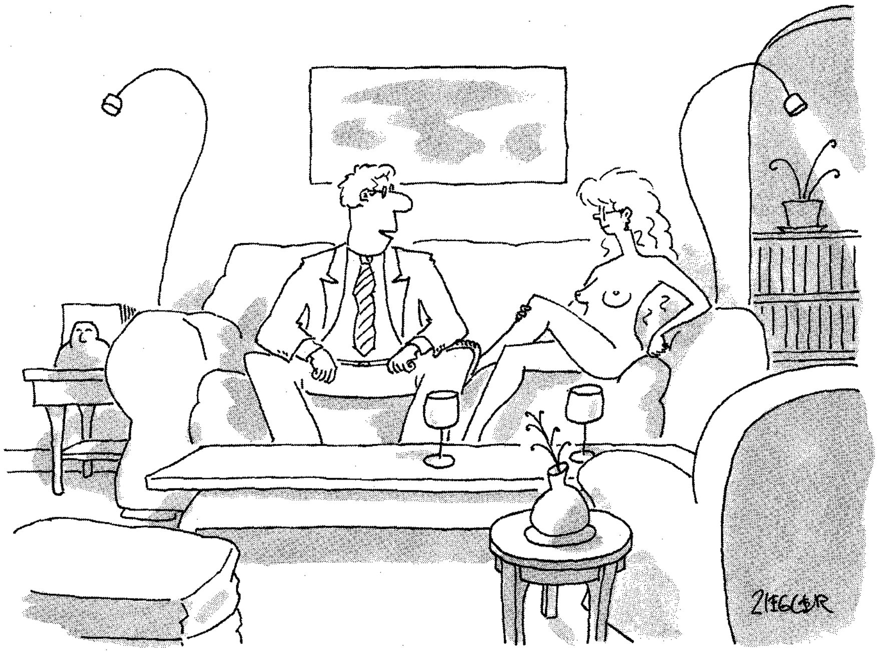
Harley didn't get many watches from Jerry, but he got good information. He and George had been looking into the watch business for a while, and the same half-dozen names kept turning up on shipping documents, in sales logbooks, scribbled on pieces of paper, fake names that they traced to New York—Pancho, Robin Hood, A-1, Zorro, Doubleday. Then, one by one, through dealers like Jerry, they began to tie the aliases to real people. When they located a source, George would start making buys, and, once he'd paid for some product and the check came back, then they could begin figuring out what the supplier did with his money. They found that almost all the suppliers were shipping their product C.O.D. by UPS, and then they realized that most of the packages were coming from two or three franchise UPS stores in Chinatown, and that some of the checks they had paid to suppliers were being endorsed and deposited by those shipping stores. At that point, they had a money trail that connected a buyer to both a vender and a shipping storefront, so they decided to raid the shippers.

The first one they raided was Billion Fortune. On the street it looked like nothing—the usual cheap tourist stuff on one side of the store, a few cell phones for sale on the other side, a little UPS counter in the back. Behind the UPS counter was a tiny office, and at the back of this office was a door. They opened the door and found a stairway leading down to a basement, and at the end of the stairway were three doors, each of which looked like an outside door, with a doorbell and heavy locks. They opened one and behind it was a series of rooms with long tables and something like fifty thousand watches. Turned out that they had stumbled on one of the oldest counterfeiting operations in Chinatown.

Hard as it was to trace Nu Be Quan's product back to its source, Harley knew that he would at least get his day in court. When he followed the supply chain further back, into Asia, the situation was not so simple. Some countries barely enforced their anti-counterfeiting laws. In that case, the trick was to entice the bad guys onto a plane and bust them in the U.S. To this end, he concocted stings—fake golf games, fake sailing regattas, fake sweepstakes wins, anything he could think of that might sound attractive to a counterfeiter. This didn't work with the Chinese in the old days, because they mostly couldn't get visas to leave China even if they wanted to, but it worked beautifully with Koreans. One time, Harley and Jim decided to tell a couple of Korean bad guys that Jim was buying a hotel in Hawaii and they should come over and be treated to a weekend of celebration. "We sent them tickets, two big players," Harley says. "We bought products from them, and then we brought them over to make the big order. But Jimmy didn't know anything about Hawaii, I'd never been to Hawaii, so how do we know what hotel to tell this guy we're gonna buy? We don't want one that's too small, because then they'll know it's a sham, and we don't want one that's so big it would be impossible for one guy to buy. Well, we went out and got a Fodor's guide to Hawaii and we picked one out that sounded just right.

"You'd never tell the hotels you were doing customs stuff, because they don't like it. You'd come in a day or two early and sneak the customs guys up the back stairway with their audio-visual equipment and wire the room up. When the time came, you'd be in the bedroom with the tape recorder and a little video screen and Jimmy would walk into the other room and play the scene out until the arrest took place. Jimmy Perrone was the best undercover I've ever known, bar none, but this time he really overplayed it. He went out on the porch, and with a big stretch of his arms he says, 'At four o'clock when we close, this is all mine!' And these Korean guys got eyes because they thought they were getting laid."

China was the hardest place to work, but it was *the* place. Sixty per cent of counterfeit seized by U.S. Customs comes from there. Counterfeits account for about a fifth of the consumer goods on the Chinese market, so the government has a pretty substantial motive not to do much about it. For this reason, foreign companies began taking matters into their own hands, hiring lawyers to find investigators, organize raids, and per-



"I like what you've done with your apartment and your clothes."

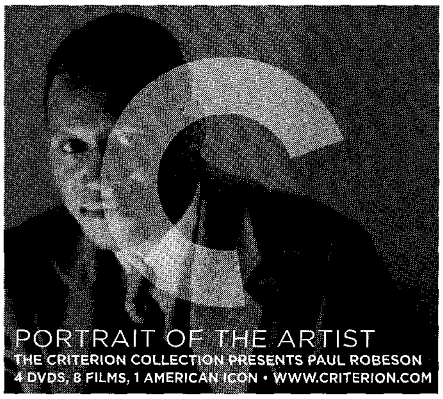
suade local officials to give their stamp of approval, using whatever methods seemed to work—fancy meals, karaoke, massage parlors.

One of the most difficult sorts of counterfeiting to detect was "third-shift" counterfeit—goods made after hours by the same factories that produced the real ones, though usually of cheaper materials. This sort of counterfeiting was one of the side effects of outsourcing, and companies liked to keep the problem secret for fear of looking like idiots and making customers suspicious. A few years ago, Harley was working for New Balance on a situation that was a particularly tortuous version of third-shift. New Balance had licensed a man named Horace Chang to manufacture shoes in Yangjiang City. Chang discovered that the only New Balance shoes cheap enough to sell well in China were the brand's classic models, and he began marketing them with great success. He expected to be congratulated, but instead New Balance told him he was endangering its reputation for high-tech athletic shoes and he should stop. When he refused, they let his contract expire. Outraged, Chang kept on selling the classics; then he started his own brand of sneakers that looked like the classics but were even cheaper. Harley brought the case for New Balance to a Shenzhen court and lost. He appealed to the high court in Guangdong province and was told that he could have a favorable verdict for three hundred thousand dollars. When he objected, the price came down to a hundred thousand, then fifty thousand. He refused.

More recently, he went after another Chinese imitator, Niu Bar Lun. Usually this kind of case was the hardest to litigate, since Chinese trademark offices routinely licensed names and logos only a hair away from famous brands. (For this reason, Harley recommends that his clients register not only their own names but every conceivable variant—Nu Balance, Neu Balan, New Barance.) Harley sued Niu Bar Lun in a court in Hangzhou and, to his delighted amazement, won.

"I like what I'm doing because it's a white-hat, black-hat type of practice," Harley says. Good guys and bad guys. "I don't have to justify it." The trouble was, he found that although nobody doubted that he was legally in the right, nobody took counterfeiting seriously as a crime, either. Sometimes people who inhabited his end of the political spectrum (his politics, he says, are "somewhere to the left of Lenny Bruce") actually suggested that he was doing something bad, putting helpless immigrants and desperate Chinese laborers out of work for the sake of making a bunch of rich French people richer. Harley could tell himself that he was protecting the real against the fake, but then he thought back to when he was a kid, before brands got so important—when, as he remembered it, people used basic, generic goods, when a sneaker was just a sneaker. Compared to that basic thingness, brands themselves seemed fake.

Still, there were signs that counterfeiting was coming into its own as a crime: it appeared that a New York counterfeiter had recently shot to death a customer who tried to return a pair of sneakers; Coach had filed a million-dollar lawsuit against Target, alleging that a Target store in Largo, Florida, had sold a single counterfeit Coach bag; a retired sumo wrestler made headlines in Japan when he was busted for selling fake Hermès and Louis Vuitton. In France, counterfeiting was taken extremely seriously—in France, just *owning* a fake bag was punishable by three years in prison. Part of the problem in America was that fashion and luxury goods did not possess the overwhelming, nation-defining clout that they did in Europe. But that was changing. "We didn't even have shows in Bryant Park till ten, eleven years ago," Liz Robbins, a lobbyist who has done work for the Council of Fashion Designers of America, says. "Certainly proof that we're leading now is that we're being copied and counterfeited. We're hot!" There were even some indications that the government was finally getting serious about counterfeiting, though jailing Canal Street shoppers still seemed a far-off dream. "I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that counterfeiting is an enormous threat to the future economic health of the U.S.," Rick Cotton, chairman of the United States Chamber of Commerce-led Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy, says. "Industries driven by intellectual property account for nearly half of our economic growth and drive sixty per cent of the growth of our exports. If the counterfeiting trend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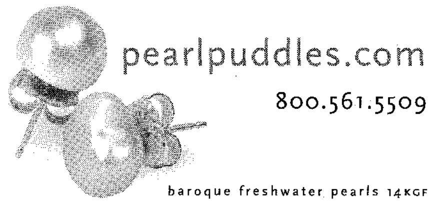
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continues, it is going to ravage our economy and undermine our future."

Surrounded as he is by fakes and fraudulence, Harley pursues authenticity. While he was in college, at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, in the mid-sixties, he walked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine carrying his harmonica and "Camping and Woodcraft," a book by a librarian named Horace Kephart that was something of a cult item among hikers, and which taught its readers how to walk through woods like a woodsman and how to make a kettle out of tree bark. Now he spends an hour most days practicing tai chi. Every August, he spends two weeks in Maine paddling a kayak with a wooden paddle of an Eskimo design that is, he believes, a thousand years old. "There's some things that are spiritual in nature," he says. "There are things that you put in your hands that other people have made and when you feel those things you feel...well, let me give you an example. When my first son was bar-mitzvahed, I gave him my tallith to wear, the one I was bar-mitzvahed in, and I wore the one my father gave to me that he was bar-mitzvahed in and that his father had been bar-mitzvahed in. It has the names of six people who wore it on a little piece of paper that's kept with it in a bag, so it's at least six or seven generations old. It's shredding. I told the rabbi afterwards, I said, 'Rabbi, you put it on and it's like being wrapped by dreams.'"

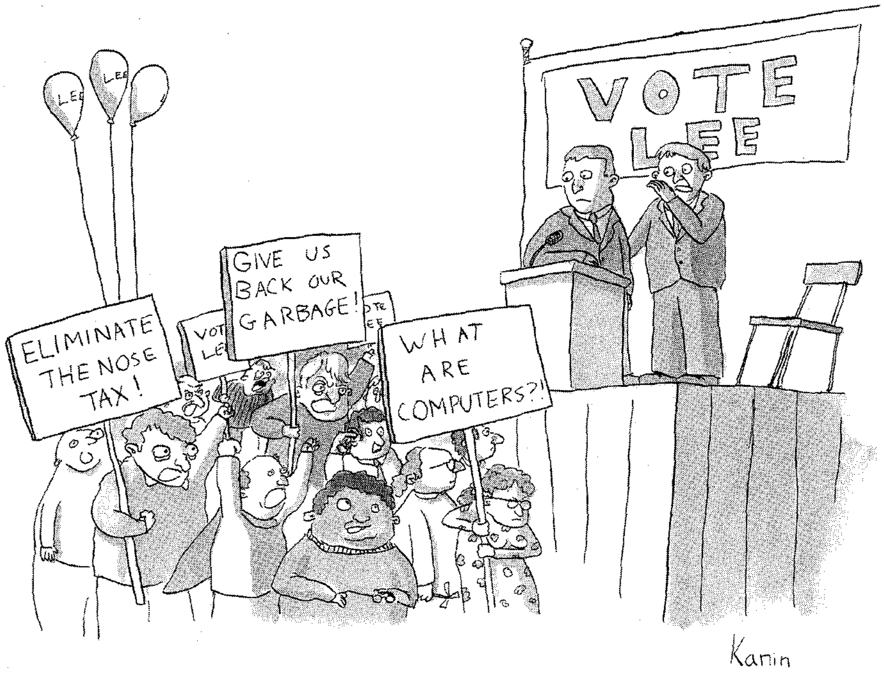
Harley flew into Washington at dawn and drove to meet his crew at the police station. It was a cold, cold morning. He was going to raid the house of a woman selling counterfeit dresses. The dress designer, Diane von Furstenberg, was annoyed because every season her designs were showing up on eBay before they made it into stores. She suspected a mole (everyone always suspected a mole), but Harley told her that moles were quite unnecessary. After every show, she sent sample sets of her clothes around the world for buyers to look at: it would be pitifully easy for someone to obtain photographs or even borrow the clothes themselves.

Harley didn't think that eBay's efforts to address the problem were worth much. It would respond to complaints promptly, by taking down a vender's offerings, but the vender could just sign up under a different name five minutes later. There were thousands of guides on eBay, posted by aficionados, instructing buyers how to spot fakes—one instructed that real Hermès bags never came with a paper hang-tag or a metal nameplate inside, another that Diane von Furstenberg varied her prints and nametags from year to year, so those should match—but the information was often misleading, and who knew if anyone paid attention. After all, some people bought fakes on purpose—there were Web sites that sold "replicas" overtly. And some counterfeits these days were of such high quality that it was almost impossible to tell the difference—fake watches plated in real gold, fake bags made in Italy out of real leather that sold for thousands of dollars.

Sellers of dresses tended to be more sophisticated than sellers of bags and watches, Harley had noticed, probably because they had to figure out how to get product sent to them from China, whereas anyone wanting to get into the bag or watch business could just pick up a few at a flea market. There were hundreds of sellers marketing Diane von Furstenberg dresses, and it would be too expensive to sue them all, so the trick was to figure out who had assets worth going after. Anyone for a few bucks could make his Web site look like Nordstrom's when in fact he was living in a double wide in Arkansas, so Harley had his investigators tracking down addresses, looking at Zip Codes, guessing.

Although he couldn't sue everyone, he knew that dress sellers talked to each other, so if he sued a few of them word would get around and put teeth in his threats when he approached the others. Just the day before, they had hit a location in California. The seller was a housewife who had a business worth about seventy thousand dollars a month. Her husband got quite hysterical when they arrived, though Harley was convinced that he knew what she was up to. (A lot of dress sellers were housewives, and he believed that their husbands generally liked the extra cash and approved of their wives' finding something to do.)

The raid site was on a quiet cul-de-sac in the suburbs, a large two-story house with a two-car garage. It sat behind a trim young lawn bordered with decorative



"We may need a clearer message."

reeds. It was just before Christmas, and there were white reindeer on the lawn, a Santa Claus on the front porch, and, on the windows, Christmas wreaths woven with gingham ribbon and tiny Teddy bears. To one side of the house was a children's playset, a lawnmower, and a grill.

The man who answered the door said that his wife was sleeping and they would have to wait until she woke up. It was eleven o'clock. Harley said he couldn't wait.

"So you're coming in," the man said, glancing at the two policemen.

"Yeah, I'm coming in."

"I take it there's no way for me to stop you?"

"No, there isn't."

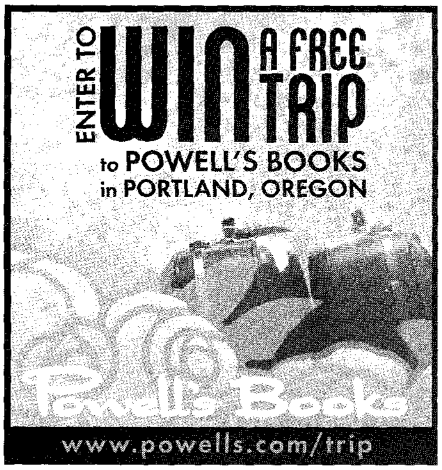
The man's wife appeared on the landing. She looked as though she hadn't slept in weeks. Her hair, dyed a streaky blond, was a mess, and her face was creased and ravaged. Harley told her that his client had started a lawsuit.

"Against me?" the woman exclaimed in disbelief, and started to cry.

Harley described quietly what he was going to do and the woman pulled herself together. She told him that the people in China had told her that the dresses were genuine overstock. Harley went to work. The woman padded down the stairs and made herself a cup of tea. Then she and her husband stood outside on the porch and each smoked a cigarette. They didn't speak. He bounced a Ping-Pong ball. She stood in her bare feet in flip-flops despite the cold.

The house downstairs was as neat as it was outside. Harley glanced into the husband's study—it, too, was immaculate. The husband appeared to be some kind of software developer who worked from home. But the wife's bedroom was a horror: clothes everywhere, full ashtrays, and under the bed a filthy chaos of old bits of food, boxes of cookies, half-eaten cookies, dirty plates, unfinished candy bars, candy wrappers, more dirty clothes.

Afterward, Harley walked away feeling apprehensive. There was something very wrong in that house, he thought. There were too many adult toys—a huge television in every room. People didn't buy toys like that unless they couldn't spend their money any other way. In the kitchen he'd seen a lot of pizza boxes—it looked as if nobody had cooked dinner for a while. He'd caught sight of a photograph of someone he was pretty sure was the wife on her wedding day, and was startled to see that she had been quite beautiful not so long ago. He thanked the cops, got into his rental car, and headed for the airport. ♦



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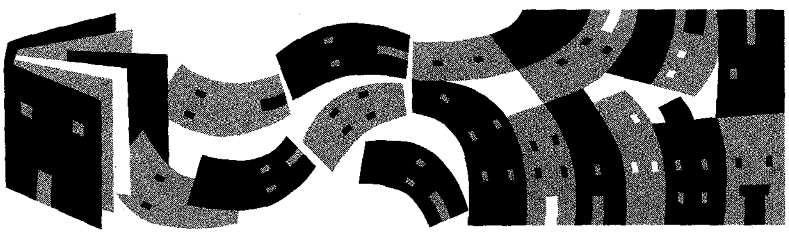


BOOKS

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

The rise of Leni Riefenstahl.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

On February 17, 1936, *Time* ran a cover story about the Fourth Winter Olympics, which Adolf Hitler had inaugurated earlier that month in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, a German ski resort near the Austrian border. The summer games, Olympiad XI, were to open on August 1st in Berlin, and the Führer had given Leni Riefenstahl virtual carte blanche to film them. Her début as a director, with "The Blue Light" (1932), a fairy tale set in the Dolomites, had excited his admiration. So had her dishevelled beauty: she had cast herself in the starring role of Junta, a mountain nymph and outcast doomed by her purity. Riefenstahl had subsequently proved to be an epic propagandist with "Triumph of the Will," a celebration of the 1934 Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, and she had gone to Garmisch in part to observe an Olympic documentary being made by Carl Junghans, in preparation for her own "Olympia." But she was also there to bask in the sunshine of celebrity.

At thirty-three, Riefenstahl was a strikingly attractive if hectic figure, with dark hair, chiselled features, and an obsidian gaze intensified by eyes set slightly too close together. Their look of adoration in the Führer's presence, and (as her rivals saw it) his indulgence of her every whim, fuelled rumors of a Valhallan romance, which heightened curiosity about her in Germany and abroad. *Time* might have devoted its cover to a Winter Olympian like Sonja Henie, the Norwegian figure-skating champion, but the building controversy over the August games, which represented a windfall of legitimacy for the Reich, decided the editors on a more electric candidate: "Hitler's Leni Riefenstahl." The sensational portrait that they chose, a departure from the usual head shot of a statesman or grande dame, is reproduced in a first-rate new biography of Riefenstahl, by Steven Bach, "Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl" (Knopf; $30), though without mention of the photographer, Martin Munkacsi.

Munkacsi (1896-1963) was a Hungarian Jew who is widely credited with inventing modern photojournalism and with reinventing fashion photography in the same dynamic mold. (A show of his work runs through April at the International Center of Photography.) Like Riefenstahl, he was a consummate stylist obsessed with bodies in motion, particularly those of dancers and athletes, and in 1930, some thirty years before Riefenstahl "discovered" the comely and artistic Sudanese people she called "my Nuba," Munkacsi returned from an assignment in Africa with a picture—of three naked boys running into the water—that became iconic, particularly to his disciple Henri Cartier-Bresson. The Nazi superstar and the Jewish émigré met at least once before the race laws precipitated his departure for New York, in 1934, and they had much in common, including international prestige and a penchant for self-mythologizing. But the source of rapture in Munkacsi's pictures is freedom. In Riefenstahl's, it is idol worship.

One of Riefenstahl's most cherished ambitions, ironically, was a Hollywood career like that of Munkacsi's fellow-émigrée Marlene Dietrich, and she clung to this fantasy tenaciously even after the Kristallnacht pogrom, in November, 1938, which derailed what was supposed to have been a triumphal cross-country American publicity tour with "Olympia." Upon docking in New York and hearing the news, she refused to believe it, and dismissed the hostility that greeted her at nearly every stop as a plot fomented, she told an interviewer on her return, "by the Jewish moneymen."

After the war, Riefenstahl was vehement that not only had she "thrown no atomic bombs"; she had never "spoken an anti-Semitic word." She lamented the fate of her Jewish friends in the film industry while claiming, on the one hand, that she had been ignorant of the Reich's racial policies and, on the other, that she had protested them personally to the Führer. Bach offers considerable evidence to the contrary, as does Jürgen Trimborn, the author of "Leni Riefenstahl: A Life" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30), translated by Edna McCown. Both cite a letter first published thirty years ago in a biography of Riefenstahl by Glenn Infield in which Riefenstahl appeals to her friend and admirer Julius Streicher, the editor of *Der Stürmer* and the most fanatic anti-Semite in a crowded field (he was hanged for his war crimes in 1946), for help with, as she puts it, the "demands made upon me by the Jew Béla Balázs." Balázs, Riefenstahl's dramaturge and co-screenwriter on "The Blue Light," was an avant-garde film critic who had also adapted Brecht's "Threepenny Opera" as a screenplay. She expunged his name from the credits so that a *judenrein* (Jew-free) version of the film could be released, and Balázs, hearing of its success, wrote to her from exile in Moscow to ask for his deferred fee. It was an easy and no doubt gratifying minor task for Streicher to deprive him of it.

Despite Walter Winchell's memorable epithet for Riefenstahl—"pretty as a swastika"—she lacked the smolder of a putative rival like Dietrich, who, she might also have noted, could speak English. In her own country, however, Riefenstahl had become an important movie star in an indigenous Teutonic genre, the "Alpine film." Arnold Fanck, its leading proponent, scorned the decadent fictions that cosmopolites like Josef von Sternberg

JOAN MUNKACSI/HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's protégée, photographed by Martin Munkacsi, on a shoot that also produced his cover for Time.

produced in the luxury of a big studio. He pioneered location shooting in extreme conditions and prided himself on authenticity, at least where daredevil feats of skiing and mountaineering were concerned. His actors were an élite fraternity of athletes who performed their own harrowing stunts, and Riefenstahl was the only woman among them. The six films, three silent ones and three talkies, that she made with Fanck between 1926 and 1933 were a showcase for her courage—if courage can be imputed to a nature that denies fear—in scaling glaciers without safety ropes and schussing down them. They were also the shop in which she served her apprenticeship for "The Blue Light," a film with the unique distinction of having impressed not only Hitler but Chaplin.

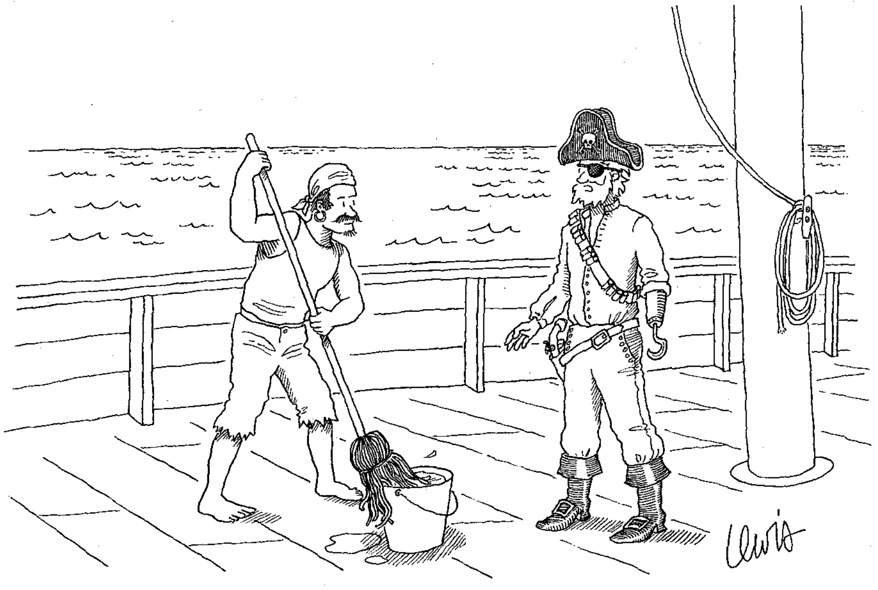
Riefenstahl's acting roles, however, like her impetuous sexual adventures of the period, tend to blur. Beginning with Fanck, her fellow cast and crew members constituted a virile harem irresistible to an emancipated sultana inclined to take her pleasure where and with whom she chose (even if she later boasted of "my well-known, almost virginal sexual history"). The bruised egos that she left behind earned her an unsporting epithet, "the nation's glacial crevasse." And jealousy, perhaps, encouraged Fanck's habit of subjecting his star and muse, in repeated takes, to immersion in freezing water, near-suffocation by avalanches, and the barefoot ascent of a sheer rock face. At least he respected her prowess. On the Nazi films, Bach writes, the supremely organized and imperious Riefenstahl "was competing with men she had displaced through a relationship with the Führer that invited speculation she actively encouraged," and who were "disposed to view her presence behind a camera as illegitimate no matter how she got there."

Considering that Munkacsi's *Time* portrait was taken before he left Germany, it encrypts a prescient reading of Riefenstahl's art and persona. She is posed in cross-country skis, appearing to ascend a slope dressed in nothing but a clingy bathing suit that flaunts the physique of a cartoon action heroine—all curves and muscle. This was the outfit, *Time's* reporter wrote, that she liked to train in. Munkacsi photographed her from a low angle, so that her steely thighs and booted feet dominate the lower half of the frame, and its vertical composition draws the eye upward past the dark V of the crotch and the swell of the breasts to a determined chin. Fanck used the same aggrandizing camera angle in his signature panning shots of men on mountaintops, and Riefenstahl echoed him in her heroic iconography of the Führer. Had she been fully clothed, the picture might have made a travel poster for the pure and fit New Germany that Goebbels was promoting as Minister of Propaganda. But Riefenstahl's grandiosity is laid bare for the world to snicker at, all the more so as she doesn't seem to notice that Munkacsi has seduced her into modelling for the subtle parody of an aesthetic—her own—that he, like Susan Sontag, perceived to be "both prurient and idealizing," as Sontag wrote forty-five years later in her essay "Fascinating Fascism."

In 1936, Riefenstahl had two-thirds of her life yet to live. "I *am* the marathon," she declared, more prophetically than she knew, in the course of filming "Olympia," and any writer who embarks on the gruelling course of her biography deserves admiration simply for crossing the finish line. Trimborn, who set out long before Bach, is a university professor and film historian in Cologne. He interviewed Riefenstahl in 1997, when he was twenty-five, having already spent six years of "intensive labor" on the project, and he briefly entertained the quixotic hope of writing a definitive book with her blessing and collaboration. Unwilling to misrepresent himself as a hagiographer, he was doomed to fail, though his disappointment does not seem to have warped his fair-mindedness. But I also suspect that the seeming absence of a talent for seduction—he writes in the patient, tongue-biting monotone that one adopts sensibly with a hysteric—turned Riefenstahl off.

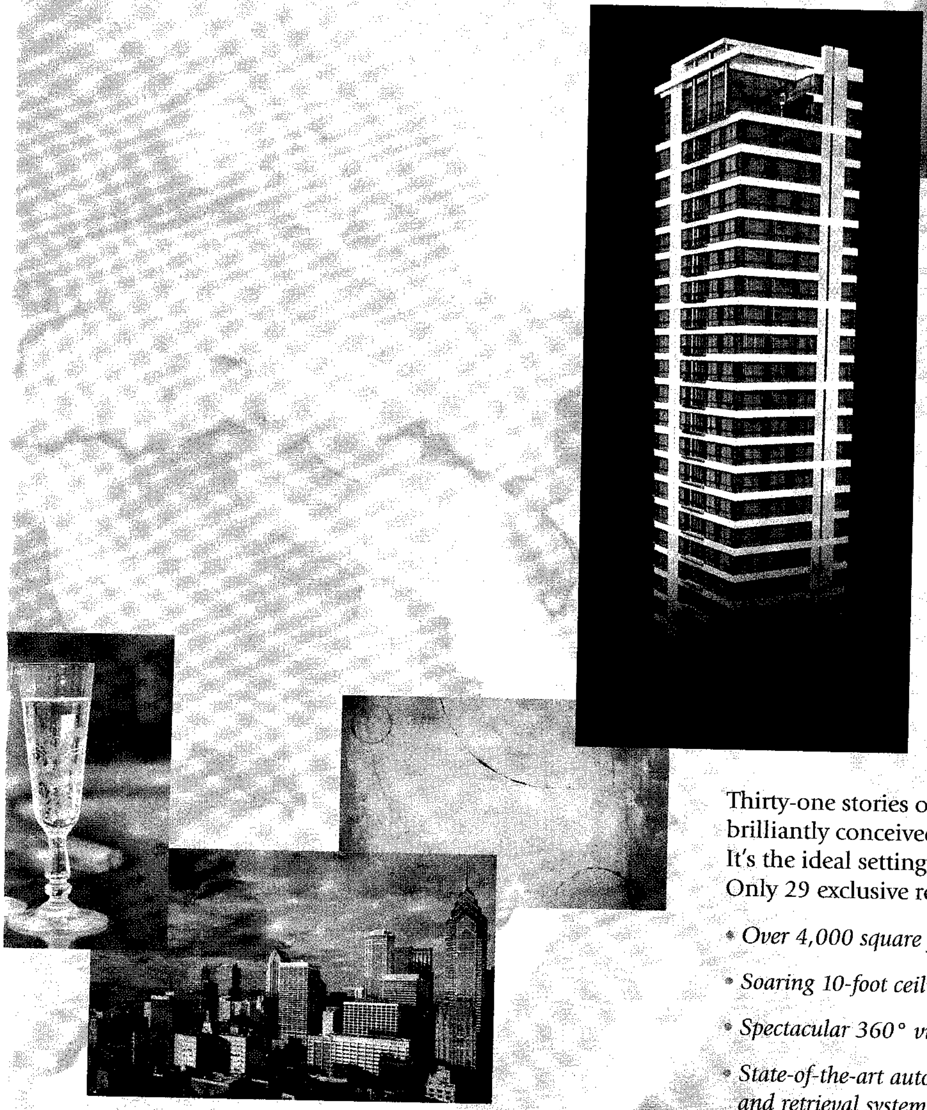
Trimborn's aim was to correct the murky published record and the "attitudes" of his compatriots. One has to admire the sniperlike precision with which he takes out fugitive falsehoods that have lived under cover for a century. His primary audience, however, was more familiar with, and thus perhaps less likely to miss, the kind of richly fleshed-out portraiture and social history that Bach—an experienced biographer, a former movie executive, and the author of a superior best-seller on filmmaking, "Final Cut"—is able to supply.

Helene Amalie Bertha Riefenstahl, a native of Berlin, was born in 1902. Her father, Alfred, a plumber who prospered in the sanitation business, was an autocratic paterfamilias in the classic mold. Leni, rather than her younger brother, Heinz, inherited his temperament. It gave her a lifelong aversion to bullying, though not when she was the one doing it. Alfred's wife, Bertha, a lovely seamstress much tried by her husband's tantrums, had once dreamed of an acting career and was vicariously invested in her daughter's. Bach offers fresh evidence for a rumor circulated by the intriguing Goebbels, among



"The eye patch is just to keep me from fixating on the hook."

Elegance by definition



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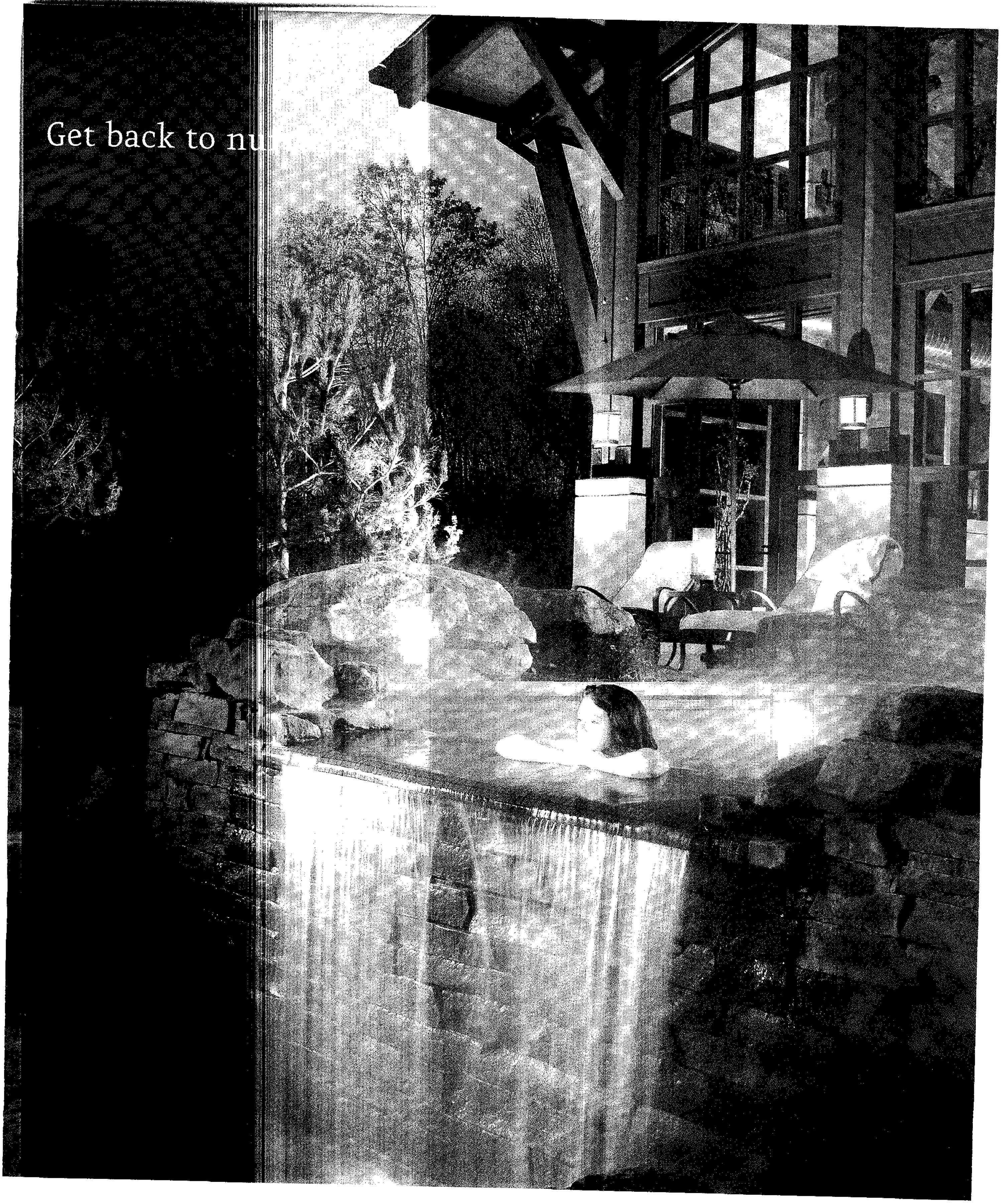

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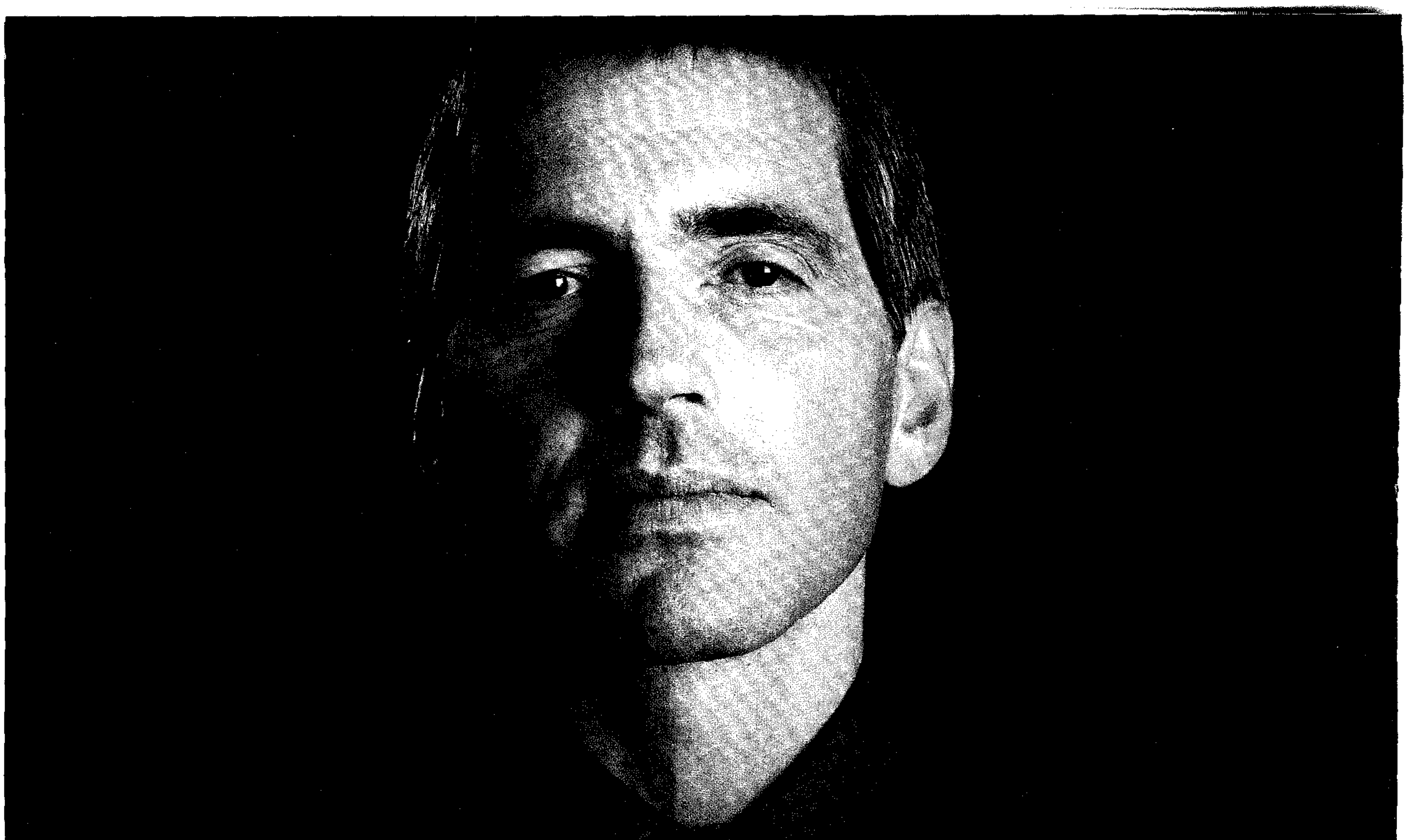

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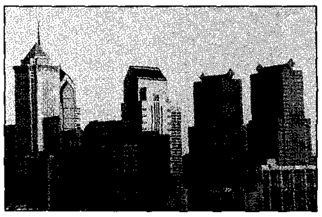

Service to the Philadelphia market

others, that Bertha's Polish-born mother was half Jewish. She died young, and Bertha's father married his children's nanny, whose name seems to have appeared on, and falsified, Riefenstahl's certificate of Aryan descent. The family owned a weekend cottage on the outskirts of Berlin, where young Leni swam and hiked and exercised a body that always gave her supreme delight. "I do not like civilization," she later told a journalist. "I like nature, pure and unspoiled."

No one could ever persuade Leni Riefenstahl that there was something she couldn't do, and she made her mind up, in her late teens, to become a dancer. Her father tried everything he could to keep her off the stage, but, through an obstinacy like his own, she admits in her memoirs, she wore him down to the point that he rented a hall for her début. Riefenstahl's dance teachers had warned her that, with a scant two years' training, she wasn't prepared to perform as a soloist, but she defied them, too. By then, she had done a little modelling, entered a beauty contest, and was shortly to pay her dues as a silent-movie starlet in a bare-breasted cameo. She had also decided to lose her virginity to a thirty-nine-year-old tennis star and police chief whom she didn't yet know, Otto Froitzheim. Riefenstahl recalled the tryst, which took place on his sofa, as "repugnant" and "traumatic" (though the affair lasted for years), and when it was over Froitzheim tossed her a twenty-dollar bill—in case she needed an abortion—which, Bach writes, was within a few months worth eighty-four trillion Deutsche marks.

In the meantime, Riefenstahl had found a rich admirer—a young Jewish financier, Harry Sokol—to bankroll a road show. With an arty program of her own device, she played some seventy engagements in seven months. It isn't fair to judge her talents on the basis of the stiff-necked Spanish dancing, leaden with vanity, that she does in "Tiefland"—her last feature, a melodrama based on the opera by Eugen d'Albert—because by then she was over forty and, by her own admission, too old for the part. One also can't say whether she could have achieved the international renown that she believed was just on the horizon, because a serious knee injury ended her tour. And the scrapbook of reviews that she collected did not include any of the critical passages that Trimborn supplies. Instead, she exulted in her memoirs, "Everywhere I went I experienced the same success—which transcends words."

Without her beauty, Riefenstahl might yet have accomplished something notable, although the career she forged is inconceivable without it. She had neither scruples nor—in the absence of an intellect, an education, or social connections—much of a choice about using her looks as a calling card. Fanck and Hitler were both prepared to be smitten before she took the initiative to arrange the meetings that would change her life. Though Fanck was originally skeptical of her inexperience, Hitler's enthusiasm, at least according to Riefenstahl, was unreserved from the beginning. In May of 1932, two months after "The Blue Light" was released, he summoned her to a village on the North Sea and, in the course of a long walk on the beach, effused about her grace. He also, she claimed, made an awkward sexual advance and announced impulsively that, if he came to power, "you must make my films."

Though the pass was, almost surely, a fantasy (even in 1936, *Time's* reporter discreetly describes the Führer as "a confirmed celibate"), the job offer wasn't, and no director in history was more lavishly subsidized or indulged by her producers than Riefenstahl was by Hitler. His first commission was for the Nazi Party rally film "Victory of Faith" (1933), a clunky practice run for "Triumph of the Will" that was conveniently made to disappear, along with the porcine co-regent on the dais with Hitler—the leader of the brownshirts, Ernst Röhm, whom Hitler had had assassinated seven months after the première. "Day of Freedom," which Riefenstahl denied having directed until 1971, when a copy surfaced, was a twenty-eight-minute afterthought to "Triumph of the Will" that was intended to placate the Wehrmacht. (Footage of the resurgent German Army was conspicuously missing from both rally films, in part because they were finished before Hitler formally renounced the Treaty of Versailles.) "Olympia" is a hybrid: servile to Fascist ideals in some respects, defiant of them in others—particularly in the radiant close-ups of Jesse Owens, America's black gold medallist. It was marketed as an independent production, though it was financed by a shell company and paid for entirely by the Reich. Rainer Rother, the author of an authoritative filmography published five years ago, points out that the closing sequence of Carl Junghans's documentary on the Winter Games—a slow-motion montage of ski jumpers—was shot by the same inventive cinematographer, Hans Ertl (one of Riefenstahl's former flames), who shot the slow-motion montage of divers that ends "Olympia." But even if Riefenstahl cavalierly appropriated imagery and techniques, and profited from the priceless gift that Hitler and history had given her—of a duel between the designated champions of good and evil—her use of multiple stationary and moving cameras, and her inspired placement of them (underwater; in trenches and dirigibles; on towers and saddles; or worn by the marathon runners in their pre-race trials), brought a revolutionary, if not strictly documentary, sense of immediacy to the coverage of sporting events.

In the course of a dark century, Riefenstahl seems to have suffered at least one spasm of something like doubt, and the moment was captured in a photograph. When Hitler invaded Poland, on September 1, 1939, she mustered some of her most seasoned technicians into a combat-film unit. They left for the front about a week later, reporting for duty "on Hitler's orders" to the small, predominantly Jewish town of Końskie. Waking under fire the next morning, September 12th—the day the Reich's news bureau promised a solution to "the Jewish problem in Poland"—Riefenstahl was on hand to witness an improvised beginning to the exterminations. Claiming that Polish partisans had killed a German officer and four soldiers, the occupying troops herded a Jewish burial detail to the main square. When the soldiers guarding the gravediggers began to kick and club them into the pit, Riefenstahl tried to intervene, she said, but they turned on her with cries of "Get rid of the bitch." Bach writes, "An amateur photographer captured her distraught expression."

The subsequent massacre at Końskie left a toll of thirty victims. An eyewitness testified that Riefenstahl had a "sobbing fit" when she saw the Wehrmacht open fire on civilians, and she later claimed to have been "so upset" by this experience that she asked for permission to abandon her assignment and return to Berlin. In reality, however, she hitched a ride on a military plane to Danzig, where she lunched with Hitler (he expressed "shock and anger" at the story, she said) and accepted his invitation to hear the victory speech in which he blamed England for the war.

Riefenstahl never made another Nazi propaganda vehicle. She grappled for a while with a project long dear to her heart—a film version of Kleist's "Penthesilea," starring herself in the title role of an Amazon queen. Hitler had promised to finance this epic from his privy purse, but it foundered, Bach writes, on the absence of a coherent script, Riefenstahl's inability to create one without the help of a collaborator like Balázs, and the outbreak of war. "Tiefland"—a sappy flop that tells the story of a Spanish village oppressed by its cruel lord—was the production she turned to. There would be little reason to recall it if the logistical challenges of filming abroad had not forced her to re-create her Iberian sets on German soil and to find some swarthy-looking peasant extras to lend her the rude eloquence of their physiognomies. Handily, the Nazis had rounded up the German Sinti and Roma and interned them in "collection camps" while they debated how to annihilate them. Riefenstahl later denied having visited the camps, but there was no denying that ninety-one selected prisoners, including children, worked without wages on the film and were returned to the camps when their scenes were done. After the war but before her de-Nazification hearings—which remarked on her lack of "moral poise" and her Nazi "sympathies" but cleared her of crimes—she sued the publisher of the German magazine *Revue*, which reported the story of the "Tiefland" extras, most of whom died at Auschwitz. With courtroom sympathies on the director's side, the defendant was found guilty of libel. In the nineteen-eighties, however, Nina Gladitz, a documentary filmmaker, located a few of the extras who had made it out alive. They testified that Riefenstahl, accompanied by a police escort, had indeed chosen them herself, and had seen the living conditions to which they were condemned.

Riefenstahl survived the debacle that her idol wreaked upon humanity to be reborn, in late middle age, as an amateur (or, according to the professionals, pseudo) ethnographer, in the Sudan. In exchange for beads and oil, but also apparently with a measure of good will, the Nuba let her photograph their ceremonial dances and wrestling matches and rituals of body painting and scarification. (When they didn't, she used a telephoto lens.) Those beautifully composed and reverential pictures, taken between 1962 and 1977, are Riefenstahl's African "Olympia." To explain the absence of imperfect specimens from her gallery, she later told an interviewer that old, ugly, or disabled Nuba hid themselves in shame.

"The Nuba of Kau" and "Last of the Nuba," Riefenstahl's lucrative coffee-table books, financed a new career. At seventy, claiming to be fifty, she was certified as a deep-sea diver, and for the next thirty years she trained her cameras on the peaceable kingdom of marine life. She still looked rather fetching in flippers and a wetsuit in her late nineties. In the course of an expedition back to the now war-torn Sudan, in 2000, she boogeyed with the Nuba maidens for a German documentary crew, and then barely survived a helicopter crash under fire from rebel troops. The pain of her physical injuries often required morphine, but the stab wounds of her persecutors, as she regarded nearly anyone who questioned her blameless version of the past, were harder to anesthetize. Yet the controversies had an upside: they were life support for her mythos.

Riefenstahl's more conscientious compatriots might stubbornly persist in treating her as a pariah, but, as she aged, a new and mainly American audience embraced her. It was led by celebrities from the entertainment world and by critics and artists who hailed her as a great auteur. Among her boosters were the organizers of the first Feminist Film Festival, in Telluride, who, in 1974, touted Riefenstahl as a role model for women directors, impervious to the irony that she had used her singularly privileged role to glorify a cult of violence and misogyny. L. Ron Hubbard briefly collaborated on a re-

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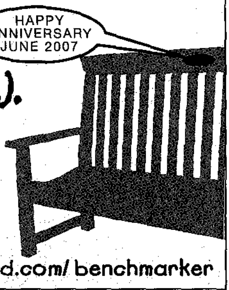
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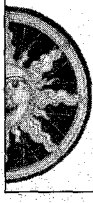
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make of "The Blue Light." Mick Jagger invited her to take his picture with Bianca. Andy Warhol added her to his collection of divas. Madonna, then Jodie Foster, aspired to star in her life story, but Riefenstahl judged neither to be worthy. George Lucas praised her modernity and acknowledged the indebtedness of "Star Wars" to "Triumph of the Will," particularly, Trimborn notes, in the Caesarean victory celebration that concludes Part IV. And, in 1998, Riefenstahl was one of the guests of honor at *Time's* seventy-fifth-anniversary banquet, along with hundreds of other newsmakers from its cover. Unshackled at last from the caption of Munkacsi's photograph, she received a standing ovation. But perhaps as it died away she heard an echo of Streicher's paean to her in 1937: "Laugh and go your way, the way of a great calling. Here you have found your heaven and in it you will be eternal."

Riefenstahl devoted the better part of her last two decades to fortifying her legend and to suing her detractors (though not only them: she tried to disinherit her only living relatives, a niece and a nephew, with a spurious will that laid claim to her brother's estate). Marcel Ophuls declined her invitation to celebrate her career in a television documentary, so she awarded the job to an unknown German, Ray Müller. He released "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl" to wide acclaim in 1993, and, seven years later, agreed to film her return visit to the Nuba. Though he himself narrowly escaped from the helicopter crash, she was furious that he hadn't caught her being pulled from the burning wreckage. It wasn't easy, she wrote at eighty-five, "to leave the present behind," but she managed to write an enthrallingly disingenuous seven-hundred-page memoir, taking her epigraph from a complaint of Einstein's: "So many things have been written about me, masses of insolent lies and inventions, that I would have perished long ago, had I paid any attention." Finally, having joined Greenpeace and celebrated her thirty-fifth anniversary with Horst Kettner, her handsome sixty-year-old companion, she died in bed, at a hundred and one—living, working, loving, lying, and litigating with prodigious vitality until her heart gave out.

Narcissism is often a kind of trance that insulates its subject from feelings of worthlessness, and Riefenstahl suffered periodic breakdowns and bouts of colitis at moments of loss or crisis that fractured her glassy-eyed assurance. Her love for the Führer was the paradigm of her self-entrancement, and she never disavowed it, although she later expressed some mild distress at the atrocities perpetrated in his name. Her life after the war would have been much easier if she had, but to do so was to betray something more essential than loyalty to a dead master. It was to endanger the ruthless suspension of self-doubt that her identity had, from childhood, depended on. And in one respect it was logical for her to love Hitler: he had the insight to recognize what her love could give him—a perfect reflection of itself.

Riefenstahl's "genius" has rarely been questioned, even by critics who despise the service to which she lent it. (Bach's cool resistance to the "often slavish lenience" of her rehabilitators is an exception.) Yet one has finally to ask if a creative product counts as a work of art, much less a great one, if it excludes the overwhelming fact of human weakness. That fact is the source of soulfulness and dramatic tension in every enduring narrative that one can think of. A seductively exciting surface, such as the morbid spectacle of a mass delusion, may distract from, but cannot insure against, a slack core, and in Riefenstahl's case a handful of sequences singled out for their formal beauty and a quality that Sontag calls "vertigo before power" have achieved an influence disproportionate to their depth or originality. They are played over and over, and many people, even film buffs, seem never to have seen—or are unaware of never having seen—Riefenstahl's documentaries in their entirety. But "Olympia" (three and a half hours long) and "Triumph of the Will" (two) both have their longueurs: endless scenes of shotputting and pole-vaulting in the former, of ranting and marching in the latter. In both, Riefenstahl relies heavily for her transitions on portentous cutaways to clouds, mist, statuary, foliage, and rooftops. Her reaction shots have a tedious sameness: shining, ecstatic faces—nearly all young and Aryan, except for Hitler's. If, by definition, the trailer for a so-called masterpiece can never be greater than the film itself, then Riefenstahl's legacy fails the test. ♦

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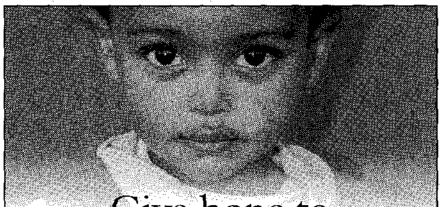

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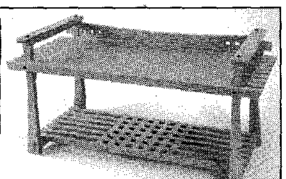

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Heyday, *by Kurt Andersen (Random House; $26.95).* Andersen's second novel follows a mid-nineteenth-century English gentleman, Benjamin Knowles, who, after fleeing Europe for political reasons, arrives in New York and falls in with an autodidact dabbler. They befriend a pyromaniac firefighter and his prostitute sister, and, when the sister leaves New York for a series of utopian communes and experimental towns, the three men follow. The book then becomes a westward road trip, featuring a series of surprising discoveries, with appearances by such real-life figures as the detective Allan Pinkerton and the soapmaker William Procter. Andersen's intricate plotting and his command of period detail keep the book moving despite its great length. Furthermore, the issues that the characters grapple with—the sense of elation at new inventions, the fear that the world may be changing unfathomably quickly, the desire to remake civilization to reflect man's new enlightenment—are as important now as they were in the nineteenth century.

Tales from the Town of Widows, *by James Cañón (HarperCollins; $24.95).* In this début novel, guerrillas forcibly recruit all the men in a Colombian village. Lacking their fathers, husbands, lovers, and sons, the women eventually create a model society, with communal property, nudity, and lesbianism. At one point, the older women debate the wisdom of a breeding program to create more men: "Didn't they remember those creatures with broad-brimmed sombreros that would go drinking rather than stay home nursing a sick son?" The premise is half poignant, half hokey, but Cañón's strong and simple writing, which is touched by humor and magic realism, never falters, as when he describes the town's using cornbread arepas as communion wafers, "sometimes sweet, sometimes salty, and, when available, flavored with cheese."

The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War, *by Leonard L. Richards (Knopf; $25).* When a golden pebble was discovered at Johann Sutter's sawmill in 1848, setting off the Gold Rush, many in the South believed that profitable new territory had become available for their peculiar institution. Southerners and Free-Soilers spent the next decade in a fight over California that, Richards argues, is integral to the story of how the Civil War began. It included the shooting of a senator, a scheme to split California in half, and a confrontation between miners and a group of Texans who tried to use slaves to stake their claims. Richards sometimes gets lost in the byways of Sacramento politics, but he draws useful connections between two great chapters that are often read in parallel. In one crossover cameo, Jefferson Davis, the future Confederate President, agitates for a transcontinental rail route that would make California "an appendage of the South."

The High Road to China, *by Kate Teltscher (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $26).* In 1774, George Bogle, a young envoy for the East India Company, departed from Calcutta for Tibet, a country that no Briton had yet entered. Eager to learn local customs, Bogle grew long whiskers, "drank a Deluge of Tea with Salt and Butter," and befriended the Panchen Lama, the incarnation of the Buddha of Boundless Light, whom he described as "a short fat Man, and as merry as a Criquet." This captivating history re-creates Bogle's epiphany that Tibet's alien culture was "far from that Barbarism which with transalpine Arrogance is too often considered as the Lot of every Nation unknown to Europeans." Alas for Bogle, his mission, to encourage the opening of trade with not only Tibet but—the greater prize—China, failed, owing to the Qianlong Emperor's disdain for the "lonely remoteness" of England, "cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea."

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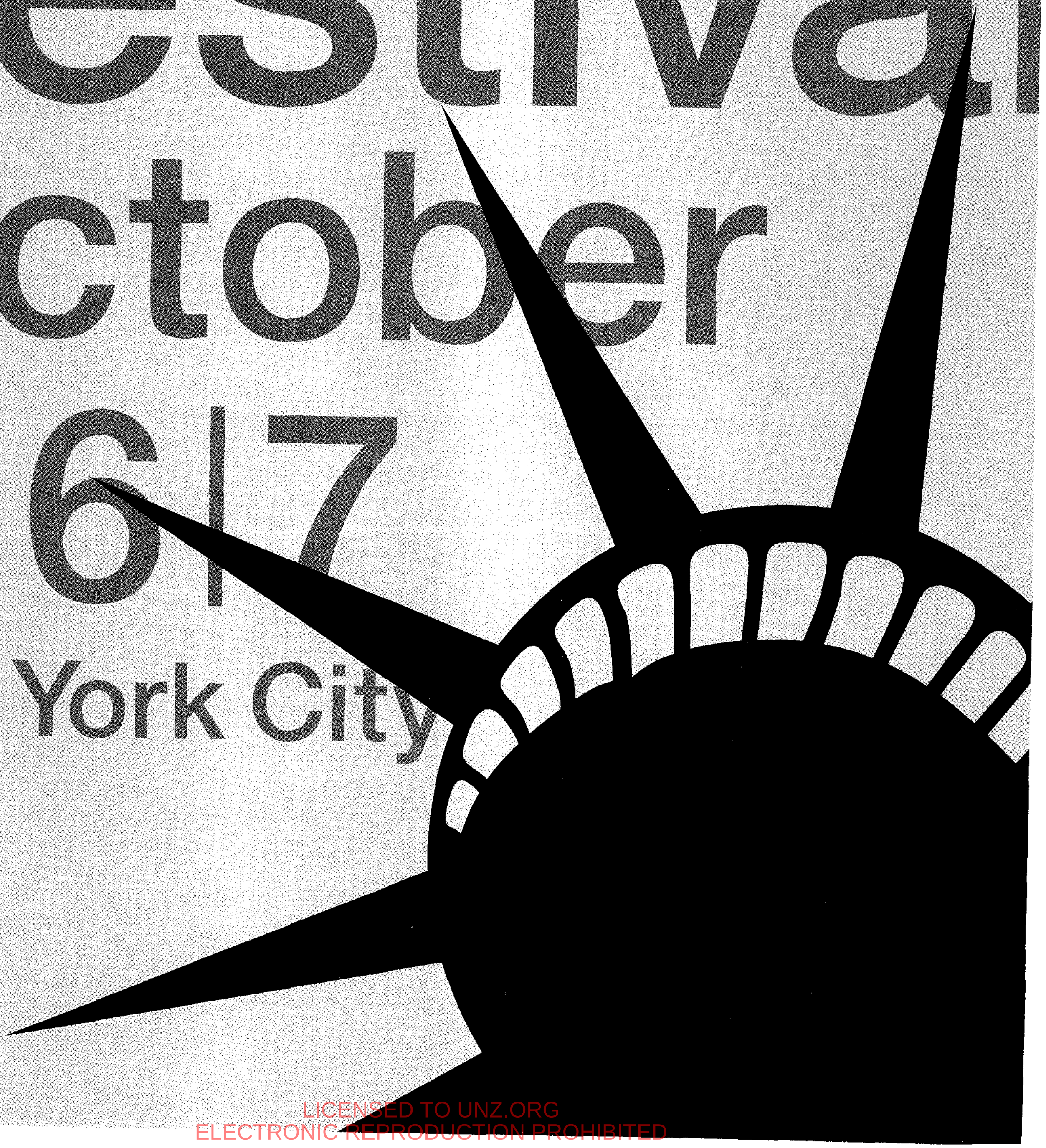


THE THEATRE

KINGS AND KINGMAKERS

Shakespeare's Lear and Marber's Howard Katz.

BY HILTON ALS

Kevin Kline is a recessive star, in the Fredric March mode, but not recessive to the point of becoming knotted up in his own acting, thank God. Like Robert Downey, Jr., he has an intelligence and a love of the game that often surpass the leaden productions in which he finds himself; he is an ironist, but one with heart. Even when he plays a big, showy character, such as his Tony Award-winning version of the swashbuckling Pirate King in the Public Theatre's 1980 revival of "The Pirates of Penzance," Kline maintains a certain skepticism; in that role, with his perpetually arched eyebrows a counterpoint to his thigh-high boots and bandanna, he repeatedly let us know that we were in on the joke. Which was? Why, the pure silliness on display—and his part in it.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1947, Kline was inspired to pursue acting, he has said, by his mother's theatrical presence. This may explain why many female powerhouses, ranging from Linda Ronstadt to Meryl Streep, seem to shine even more brightly in Kline's light. In recent years, Kline has played opposite Streep in Mike Nichols's 2001 revival of Chekhov's "The Seagull" and in George C. Wolfe's 2006 production of Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children," both at the Public, and Streep has never had a better leading man. Kline knows just what to do with a diva: he hangs back as she shapes the show with her ferocious energy and will, then, once she feels safe enough to relax, he swoops in to share the stage. Kline matches Streep's strengths with a jocular intensity of his own. Onstage with him, she lightens up. And we do, too.

But as the star of "King Lear" (now at the Public) Kline has only one real partner, and he's a man: the sweet and arresting Philip Goodwin, who plays the Fool. Goodwin, with his Harpo Marx curls, is a kind of wife figure to Kline's Lear, and their relationship eclipses all others here, with the possible exception of that between the Earl of Kent (Michael Cerveris) and the aged sovereign. We focus on Lear and the Fool less as a way of seeing the play from a new perspective—though we do that, too—than as a way of observing Kline at work, searching for his own style within Shakespeare's torrent of words and ideas. Toward the end of Act I, dressed in dark colors as he sits beside the Fool on the second level of the three-tiered stage (the bare set is by Heidi Ettinger; the sometimes tacky costumes are by Jess Goldstein), Lear is nearly mute with anger. He has just dismissed his eldest daughter, Goneril (Angela Pierce), in a fit of pique. The Fool, baffled by the seemingly uncontrollable fury that the manipulations of Lear's two elder daughters have engendered in him, shows his love and support as much through his humor and silence as through his constant pressure on the King—*his* King—to retain his reason amid the madness. Unlike Goneril and Regan (Laura Odeh), the Fool tries to cajole his master out of his morose rumblings with puns and questions that are meant to prod the old man into thinking, which is to say, into being who he is: a ruler. From this production's edited text, we hear:

> LEAR: I did her wrong.
>
> FOOL: Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?
>
> LEAR: No.
>
> FOOL: Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.
>
> LEAR: Why?
>
> FOOL: Why, to put's head in, not to give it away to his daughters and leave his horns without a case.
>
> LEAR: I will forget my nature: so kind a father!
>
> FOOL: The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.
>
> LEAR: Because they are not eight.
>
> FOOL: Yes indeed, thou wouldst make a good fool.
>
> LEAR: To take't again by force—monster ingratitude!
>
> FOOL: If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.
>
> LEAR: How's that?
>
> FOOL: Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.
>
> LEAR: O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! I would not be mad. Keep me in temper, I would not be mad.

Although Kline and Goodwin's duets are brilliant, the production, directed by James Lapine, does not help us get a grip on the play as a whole. We care little about Goneril's and Regan's struggles, and we barely notice Cordelia (Kristen Bush) and her steady effort to counteract her sisters' capitalist greed with a kind of humane socialism. Lapine is right to bring Lear's relationship with the Fool to the forefront of the play: Kline's strengths lie in the delicate, the quiet, and the intimate moments, not in Lear's more bombastic scenes. But, by relegating the various subplots to the margins, Lapine turns most of the other characters into mere figures in a shadow play. (This may be just as well in the case of the Earl of Gloucester's bastard son, Edmund—played by Logan Marshall-Green—and his quest to destroy his brother and his father; Marshall-Green is a perfectly amiable young actor, but he lacks the severity of intention, the nefarious gravity of one who resides between resentment and anarchy.)

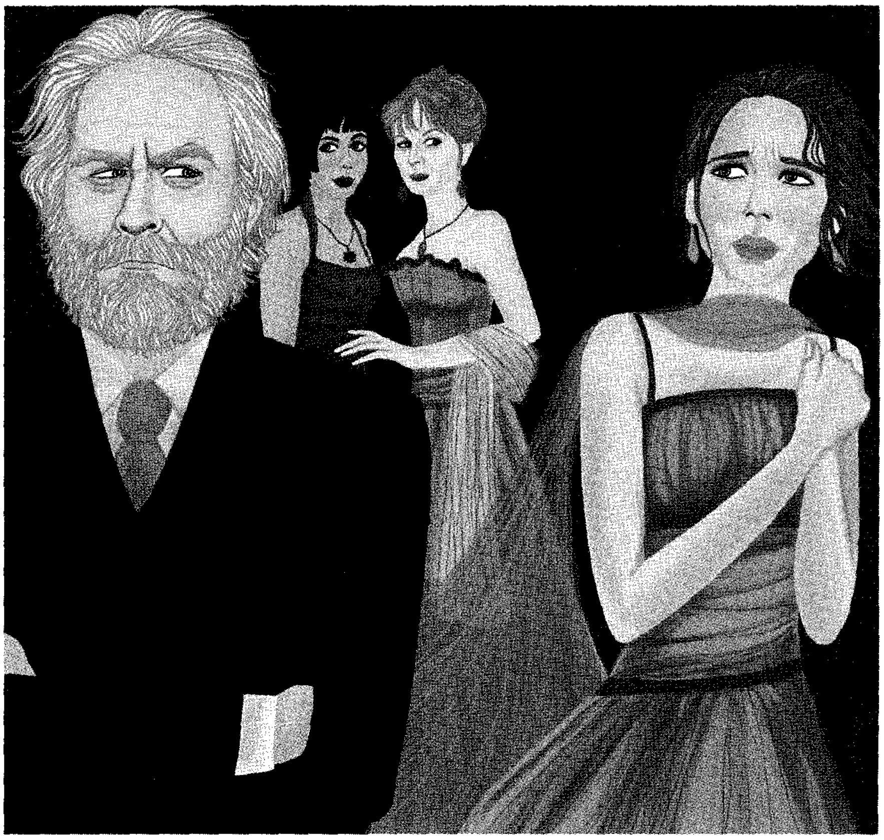
As every actor knows, Shakespeare wrote for the performer. In order to do justice to his plays, the actor must trust not only that he will be supported by the language but that he will find a measure of freedom in it. If the actors feel free, the director has done his work. Lapine, however, seems less like a director than like a manager. These actors work hard, but most of them move about the stage as if they were hemmed in by the weight of the text rather than liberated by it. The audience registers them almost entirely through Lear and the Fool's reactions to them. Only Cerveris's Kent seems to force himself into our consciousness, with his thrilling, bass-inflected voice. Known to most theatregoers as Sweeney Todd, in John Doyle's 2005 production of Stephen Sondheim's musical (Sondheim provided appropriate, if not particularly inspired, minimal music for this "Lear," too), Cerveris has a devotion both to his own part as an exiled earl and to the other actors onstage. Using his deep voice like a shield, he tries to protect Kline's Lear from the world; in his presence, the androgynous Kline becomes almost feminine.

Kline's Lear is something to see, because he usurps the traditional reading of the role. While Alvin Epstein brought a scary, childlike stubbornness and anger to La MaMa's rendition of the play last year, Kline does something altogether different and unexpected: he brings Lear down a notch. He makes his portrayal distinctly *literary*. He internalizes all the moments that other actors—Epstein included—have used for grandstanding. Even when he is caressing Cordelia's dead body, Kline's Lear doesn't bellow out a "Howl, howl, howl, howl" of lament; he utters the word in a sad whisper of resignation. In that moment, he sounds almost like a flute muffled by a pillow. The pillow is his broken heart. Lear is a role that has challenged, defeated, and embraced great actors the world over. Here, Kline joins the pantheon.

Alfred Molina has a large chest, a long gait, and a big approach to most of the roles we are lucky enough to see him in. More familiar to American audiences for his film career than for his work on the stage, the British-born Molina tore the screen—and our hearts—to pieces as Kenneth Halliwell, the playwright Joe Orton's frighteningly defended, insecure, and ultimately murderous and suicidal lover, in Stephen Frears's 1987 film "Prick Up Your Ears." Ten years later, Molina went mad again. As Rahad Jackson, a drug dealer marooned in a kind of cocaine-fuelled grandeur in Paul Thomas Anderson's "Boogie Nights," he had a hideous expressiveness—that slightly off glint in his eye—that both scared and thrilled viewers. You wouldn't want to be alone with Molina, but it was fun to imagine the nightmares he might cause.

As the eponymous hero of Patrick Marber's "Howard Katz" (a Roundabout Theatre Company production at the Laura Pels), Molina plays an agent who has lost everything. When the play opens, he's asleep on a park bench, his long body made even more uncomfortable by his bespoke suit. A hustler named Robin (Euan Morton) enters, asks for a cigarette, and engages his somewhat testy new friend in a bit of wordplay. Robin is clearly hoping for a bit of swordplay, too. But Howard isn't that kind of guy. At least, he doesn't think he is. As he reflects on the journey that has brought him to this sorry state, Howard removes a yarmulke from his pocket. He is spiritually bereft, adrift, a tough guy with nothing but memories to sink his teeth into. The lights dim, and people from his past—his family, his business associates—line up at the back of the stage. We see Howard Katz—the pre-homeless Katz—at work in his office, telling his clients to fuck off, abusing his secretary, and becoming more than a little overwhelmed by the plaintive demands of his wife, Jess (the always great Jessica Hecht). (Another terrific actor in the show is Alvin Epstein.) Katz has a hunger for something that no amount of barking and manipulation can satisfy. He's a rageaholic in search of an audience, and most of the people in his life have put up with him only because they need him—they need his power and his ability to get things done, even as he tears them down.

Marber scored a hit here in 1999, with "Closer," his chamber play about the problems of infidelity in a society in which the center does not hold. "Howard Katz" feels like a coda to that play, a bitter character study, or a revenge fantasy directed at all those agents and other self-aggrandizing functionaries of the world who pump themselves up by wielding power. Still, one cannot help wondering what the point of the show is. Even though Marber begins "Howard Katz" with a kind of dénouement—a trader of souls becomes a man who learns to question the nature of his faith—I couldn't quite keep the plot points going in my head. Marber never really tries to make us understand why Katz is now clinging to a religion that he all but ignored until he hit bottom. As a play, "Katz" feels only half written. But as long as Molina was filling the stage with his almost absurd passion for performance, I considered the ninety, intermissionless minutes worth it. To paraphrase the nuns in "The Sound of Music," how do you solve a problem like Howard Katz? Worship Molina, not his material. ♦


Lear and his daughters: Kevin Kline, Laura Odeh, Angela Pierce, and Kristen Bush.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

ABSTRACTION PROBLEM

Two new shows on an old idea.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Remember abstract painting? It used to be the living end of modernity in art. Now it's just one variety of produce in the supermarket of visual culture. Two shows stir thoughts on the subject: new work by the paladin of white paintings, Robert Ryman, at PaceWildenstein, and "Comic Abstraction," representing thirteen contemporary artists inspired by comics, cartoons, and other mediums of demotic fun, at the Museum of Modern Art. Ryman, seventy-six years old, is a Tennessean who came to New York in 1952 to be a jazz musician, and encountered the art world while working, for seven years, as a guard at MOMA. He matured as an artist in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties, between the decline of Abstract Expressionism and the dawn of minimalism. He conjoined and, ever since, has stayed true to features of both movements: expressively pure painterliness and blunt matter-of-factness. His works are as much mute essays in aesthetic philosophy as objects of pleasure. They delight, if you let them, by clarifying the material givens of any painting: shape, scale, paint texture, underlying surface, and attachment to a wall.

An Adaptive, by the veteran Austrian artist Franz West.

"LISA DE COHEN WITH ADAPTIVE" (1983)/ARCHIV FRANZ WEST

Most of the works in "Comic Abstraction," by younger artists, derive inspiration—albeit remote and attenuated, and, at this late date, perhaps unconscious—from the same era that formed Ryman, when abstraction was still a reigning imperative and self-consciousness in and about aesthetic experience became an iron law. But they yoke those ideals to pursuits of frisky entertainment or earnest politics. Has abstraction, since the sixties, fallen from grace, or been liberated from preciousness? Both may be true.

There are four works in the Ryman show, all of them called "No Title Required" (2006)—finessing a title, "Untitled," so common in the heyday of minimalism as to become something of a joke. (When not using it himself, Ryman has favored astringently poetic titles, on the order of "Regis," "Consort," and "Journal.") The main attraction is an ensemble of ten paintings in smooth white enamel on wood, each a different size in a narrow range from fifty to fifty-five inches square. Each incorporates a wood frame (in oak, cherry, or maple), mounted flush. Paint bleeds across the abutments between surface and frame, establishing the paint skin as the work's forward plane. This being Ryman, every aspect of what you see counts. The units hang close together along most of one wall and part of another. The walls are a matte, muted white, in contrast to the work's glossy, bright enamel. Ghostly reflections of yourself provide vestiges of pictureness. Illumination is indirect, from banks of lights that shine on a wall across the room. The carpentry of the frames is imperfect; slight separations at their corner joins—as well as occasional cracks in the paint between frame and panel—register as chance elements of drawing. The grains, knots, and natural colors of the frames become practically rococo in their visual appeal, amid the prevailing blankness. The units' shifting sizes defeat a reading of them as a unified whole. The suite's length is given as six hundred and eighty-eight inches, which works out to fifty-seven and one-third feet. Intentional or not, that gawky one-third (an infinity of threes, when expressed in decimals) seems Rymanesque, consistent with a thoroughgoing aim to pique and discombobulate comprehension.

The three other works in the show are paintings on linen stapled over frames, each more than seven feet square. (Again, painting fronts frame, this time with the added thickness of the linen.) White oil paint is applied in brushy flurries over a very slightly darker ground. Surface qualities vary almost—but never quite—enough to suggest pictures of something: clouds, perhaps, or foliage. The effect is a stammer in the visual cortex, as your brain doggedly tries and incessantly fails to make conscious sense of the sensory input. This isn't an unusual phenomenon in abstract art, or even in figurative art. (It also occurs in daily life, when confusion about what we see triggers a double take.) But such delicate fallibilities of eye and mind are the engines of Ryman's art, which plays with self-aware looking for its own sake. How much you like him depends on a couple of things. First, how highly do you value feeling sensitive and smart? "Getting" a Ryman can produce the thrill, at your own acuity, that comes with grasping a proposition in mathematics or a tricky passage of music. For Ryman fans—including me, off and on—the effect is addictive. Second, do you buy into a romance of painting in extremis, so imperilled by skepticism that, to survive as indispensable art, it must jettison all functions that are not identical with its conceptual scheme and physical reality?

That romance dates Ryman as one of a cohort of abstract painters who, in the nineteen-sixties, simplified painting to save it. Others were the late Agnes Martin, with delicate grids, and Brice Marden, with brooding monochromes. (Frank Stella's insolently literal-minded designs on blocky stretchers were the height of sophisticated taste back then; their emotional numbness has consigned them, in retrospect, to period décor.) Marden, as a marvellous recent retrospective at MOMA proved, has since reclaimed for disciplined abstraction a repertoire of tensile drawing and eloquent color. Ryman has sustained the old sense of crisis, as if each of his many ingenuities—with different paints and supports, and, over time, with a hardware store's worth of deliberately obtrusive screws, brackets, and other mounting devices—were a tale told by Scheherazade to win another night's reprieve, never mind that the sultan who had to be propitiated is dead. Ryman is a favorite of certain academic critics who, loyal to intellectual adventures of avant-garde art in the fifties and sixties, ignore most contemporary art and seem to mark time until a new development, or Second Coming, merits their engagement. Still, Ryman stays fresh and taut. Even out of date, his conscientious integrity ought to abash today's hordes of careering youngsters, whose idea of the future of civilization reaches little beyond the next art fair. But to be shameable, under present conditions, may be an unaffordable moral luxury.

Vivacious brassiness rules in "Comic Abstraction," organized by Roxana Marcoci, a curator in MOMA's photography department—an interesting choice, given that the show contains no photographs. Except for an installation by one strongly original veteran artist, Franz West, the works on hand amount to new wine in old bottles. "Mirror in a Cabin with Adaptives" (1996), by West, the sixty-year-old Austrian Pied Piper of audience participation, invites viewers to disport themselves, in front of a mirror, with odd and appealing constructions of lumpy plaster on metal rods. Even declining the offer, I feel in good hands with West, a terrific sculptor who is conceptually as rigorous as Ryman, in a hippieish kind of way. Fully seven of the artists in the show run variations on the New York School of big painting—the expansive and diffusive field that was invented by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, and that has been adopted by painters of every subsequent generation. Like the blues foundations of rock and roll, it is easy to learn and it always works, if you can keep the beat. The challenge is to give it distinctive content and style. Pop art introduced the frisson of wedding lowdown imagery to the big painting's sublime form. Cartoonishness has been a regular recourse of master painters from Roy Lichtenstein and Sigmar Polke to Carroll Dunham and Albert Oehlen. Their number is not increased by anyone in "Comic Abstraction," whose wrinkles of novelty are just a proliferation of peculiar techniques and an amplification, to simultaneous extremes, of the ceremonious and the vulgar.

The show's cast of picture-makers includes the lately ubiquitous Takashi Murakami, with crisply stylized renditions of spurting bodily fluids (breast milk and sperm) in baby pink and baby blue; Sue Williams, with what look to be Pollock-like fields, until you make out their constituent cartoon imagery of orgiastic goings on; Arturo Herrera, with a likewise webby, exceedingly handsome mural in which lurk scenes of Walt Disney's "Snow White"; Julie Mehretu, the up-and-comer in this group, with a heady, infernally complicated overlay of diagrammatic motifs; Polly Apfelbaum, with a mandala on the floor, about eighteen feet in diameter, of dyed velvet petals whose color scheme alludes to the television cartoon "Powerpuff Girls"; and Inka Essenhigh, with neo-Surrealist creepy-crawlies in shiny enamel. Two African-Americans tackle racial themes: Ellen Gallagher, with lovely Agnes Martin-like compositions that incorporate tiny caricatures of Negroid lips and eyes; and Gary Simmons, with a smeared chalk drawing of a particularly vile black cartoon character of the nineteen-thirties. For appropriate jollies, there's an installation by the late Spaniard Juan Muñoz: a darkened room with a lit-up mousehole, accompanied by a soundtrack, composed by the artist and a collaborator, of Saturday-morning whizzes, squeals, and thumps. New to me, poignantly, are jazzy paintings and a bank of video monitors flashing fractured logos by a conspicuously gifted German, Michel Majerus, who died in a plane crash, in 2002, at the age of thirty-five. Two other artists contribute negligible works with arbitrary political associations.

Is all of this a mite thin and forced? It is, along with almost everything else of recent vintage in an art world where frenetic production has outrun any substantial supply line of ideas. Nearly a century of experiments in abstraction have become a fund of handy tropes. What's lost—while being barely preserved, with monkish zeal, by the likes of Ryman—is a sense of risk at the frontiers of convention. Pablo Picasso once zeroed in on the fundamental problem of abstract art, which he rejected, as "only painting. What about drama?" He added, "There is no abstract art. . . . A person, an object, a circle are all 'figures'; they react on us more or less intensely." The best modern abstract artists countered with jolting demonstrations of art's intrinsic powers, independent of worldly reference. But their project proved self-defeating, as the looks of a Pollock or a Mondrian became just additional items in the world's image bank, alongside Titian nudes and Mickey Mouse. Picasso's cynical wisdom (minus his driving genius, of course) is common sense now, as artists like those in "Comic Abstraction" mix and match stock elements, with ever less drama and with intensity dwindling away. ♦

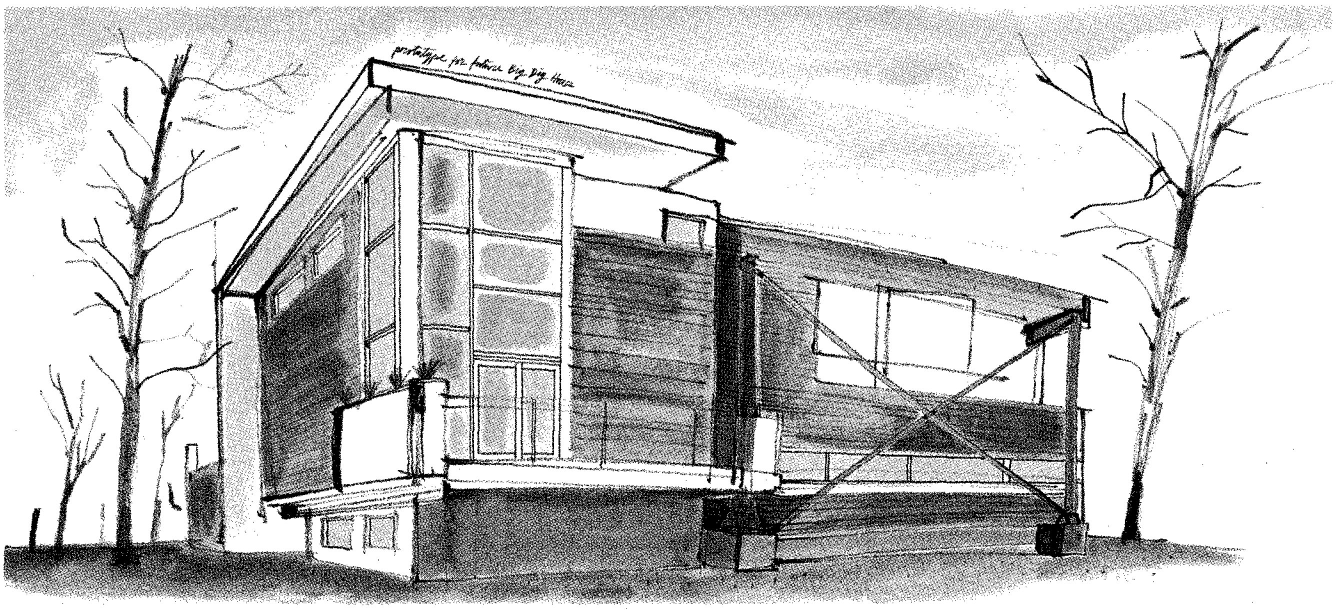
THE SKY LINE

SALVAGE ARTISTS

A new home from old roads.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

One day in the winter of 2003, John Hong opened an e-mail to Single Speed Design, the architecture firm he runs with his wife, Jinhee Park, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was from a structural engineer named Paul Pedini, who said that he had seen a Single Speed project and liked it so much that he wanted to hire the firm for an unusual project. He explained that he worked at a contracting company that had spent a decade on the Big Dig, the huge project to replace Boston's elevated Central Artery with a tunnel, and that he had come up with the idea of using steel and concrete salvaged from the project to put up a building. "It would be sort of like Junkyard Wars meets Habitat for Humanity," he wrote.


prototype for future Big Dig House

All the basic structural materials for the Big Dig House were salvaged from the project to dismantle Boston's Central Artery.

FILIPE JARDIM

Hong wondered how to respond. "You get a lot of weird e-mails if you put your sign in front of a construction site," he said. But he and Park went to meet Pedini in a junk yard a few miles north of Boston where the company was storing highway sections. "When I saw all this stuff, I realized he was serious," Hong said.

The eventual result was the Big Dig House, which was finished early last year. One of the more improbable pieces of serious architecture in the United States, it has won a couple of architectural awards and has brought Single Speed a level of acclaim unusual for such a young firm. The basic structure is entirely made up of salvaged steel and concrete from the Big Dig—three hundred tons' worth. Because the materials were obtained for free, and because Pedini was able to do much of the construction himself, the house, which measures forty-three hundred square feet, was built at the strikingly low cost of approximately a hundred and seventy-five dollars per square foot. Yet it doesn't look like a recycled highway, and it would be among the best contemporary houses in the Boston area even if it had been built the old-fashioned way.

The house sits among a well-known group of modern houses called Six Moon Hill, in Lexington, a suburb northwest of Boston. Other than the concrete foundations, the concrete-block garage wing, and a huge X of steel tubes used for wind bracing, the exterior is mostly glass and cedar siding, softened by an elaborate roof garden atop the garage. The garden is made possible by thick highway slabs of reinforced concrete, capable of supporting three feet of soil. (Not all the systems within the house are green, but the rooftop garden uses recycled rainwater.) Steel beams from roadway tunnels form the basic structure of the house but are mostly invisible until you go inside. The front corner of the façade has a two-story glass window, behind which is a soaring, double-height space topped with steel beams and punctuated by an open steel staircase. It is exhilarating: one part urban loft, one part suburban house, wrapped together into a good-natured tutorial in sustainable building.

Park is thirty-four, and Hong is thirty-eight. In architect-years, this is young, and it's too early to tell whether they will go on to establish significant careers. Nonetheless, in their aspirations and choices, they typify much of what it is to be a young architect in America today. Their Web site is more polished than their office, which occupies a storefront in a small wooden commercial building in Cambridgeport, a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood between Harvard and M.I.T. The name Single Speed comes from the bicycles they ride. "It's

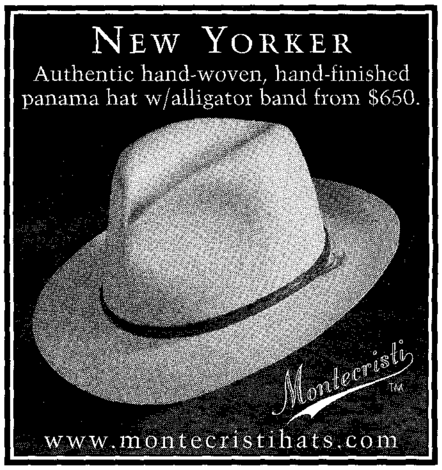
Cambridge—all of us ride bikes," Hong said. "We didn't want an overintellectualized name." Hong and Park met at Harvard, in 1997. Park had recently arrived from South Korea, where she had grown up. She is quiet and intense, and uncompromising in her determination to carry through a design to the smallest detail. (For one project, she produced a full-size drawing of the lighting and curtain tracks, convinced that it was the only way to get the contractor to arrange them exactly as she wanted.) Hong, who grew up in Virginia and has a kind of affable swagger, is the more pragmatic of the pair. While working for a couple of years as an intern in a large architectural office in New York, he pursued a parallel career in rock bands and played at CBGB.

Hong and Park, who married in 2000, started off with the kind of work architects usually get at the beginning—loft renovations for friends, a beach house—but the year they opened their office, in 2001, a Cambridge developer asked them to design a three-unit condominium building on Valentine Street. It was this building that caught Paul Pedini's eye. Valentine Houses was designed to give each unit a double-height living room, lots of natural light, multiple exposures, and outside balconies. To do this on a cramped urban site Hong and Park created an ingenious series of interlocking spaces, wrapped in a tight skin of horizontal cedar boards. The building looks more like a modern town house than an apartment building, and it is at once a comment on Cambridge's old clapboard houses and a challenge to them. Hong and Park moved into one of the units themselves.

After the Valentine Street condominium was finished, its developer offered Single Speed more commercial projects, and soon there were invitations to design condominiums in Brooklyn and Jersey City. Last year, Single Speed completed a loft in New York for two branches of a family whose primary residences are in Boston and Washington. The family wanted the space to be flexible enough to be used by each of them alone and also to be able to accommodate all of them in residence together. The loft is on a high floor of a new building in Chelsea, open to the north, with a spectacular view of the Empire State Building. A huge, diagonal partition with sections of translucent glass slices across the space, angled to open most of the living area to the view. The project was devised by Park to allow instant customization of the space each time one family leaves and the other arrives. The diagonal wall contains smaller, moveable partitions and storage lockers. Park also came up with a system of aluminum mesh curtains which hang around the main living area to create a sense of separate zones amid the larger space. Park refers to the design of the loft as "parenthetical space"—both a reference to the curving shape of the mesh curtains and a metaphor for the notion of occasional use.

Such work has brought Single Speed Design to the brink of real commercial success, but recently Hong and Park have decided that this won't do. Developers tend to treat architects' designs as something they can play around with, and Hong and Park probably sense that the excitement generated by the Big Dig House has given them the opportunity to aim higher. Earlier this year, they decided to devote most of their time to entering architectural competitions around the world. This is how many architects get their first big commissions, but competitions are expensive and time-consuming. To cut their overhead, Hong and Park laid off all but one of their staff—until recently, they employed six—and they now partly live off their wages from occasional teaching at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard. They have yet to win a major competition, but they have placed second or third in several. (Hong says he is thinking of changing the firm's name to Honorable Mention.) Even honorable mentions sometimes come with money. Last year, Single Speed received twenty thousand dollars for an honorable mention in a competition to design the Asian Cultural Center in Kwangju, South Korea. "We spent thirty thousand dollars on that, so it's not too bad," Hong said.

Hong and Park recognize that their decision to curtail commercial work is not one that most architects make, but Park feels that there was no choice. "I had the fear that we would lose our focus," she said. Hong agreed but admitted that he wasn't quite as sure. "Your fear is professional failure," he said to Park. "My fear is fear of starving." ◆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THE CURRENT CINEMA

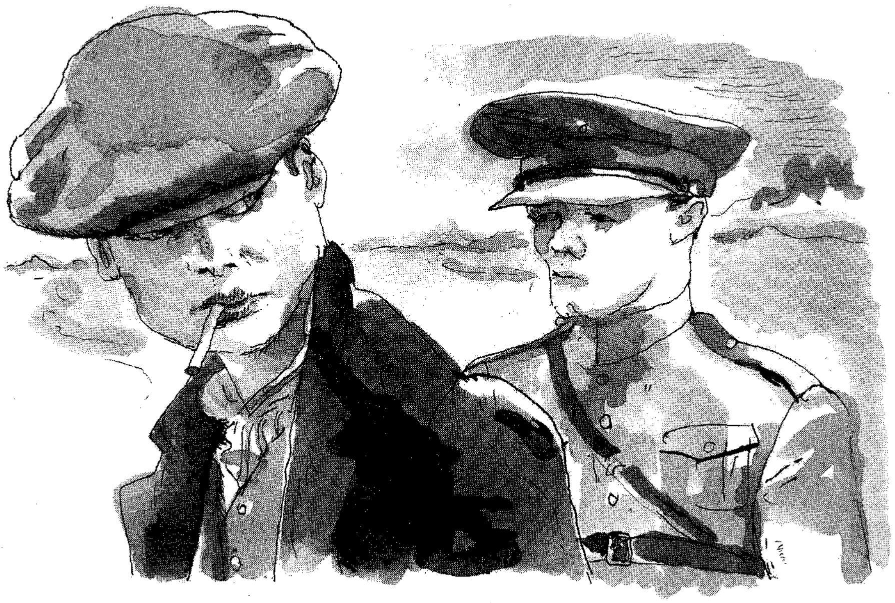
TAKING SIDES

"The Wind That Shakes the Barley" and "Zodiac."

BY DAVID DENBY

As any aisle-hugging aesthete will tell you, the look, feel, and form of a film are just as important as its "themes." Indeed, the thematic material of a movie can no more easily be separated from the cinematic means that produce it than melodies can be separated from notes. Still, critics do it. Readers, we tell ourselves, have the right to know what a movie is ostensibly about. So I would have to say that Ken Loach's wonderful "The Wind That Shakes the Barley," which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes last May, is about a savage little corner of the Irish rebellion against the British in the years 1920 to 1922; that, more particularly, it's about two brothers from County Cork who fight the vicious English counter-revolutionary force, the Black and Tans, but then part company over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which established the Irish Free State but preserved its dependent status as a "dominion" within the British Empire. One brother, Damien (Cillian Murphy), wants complete separation from the United Kingdom and a socialist revolution in Ireland; the other, Teddy (Pádraic Delaney), is willing to accept the treaty as the best possible outcome for the moment. The British are gone (except from Northern Ireland), but revolutionary solidarity among the Irish collapses into civil war. There's our theme: the revolution devours its children.

But, even as I write these words, I know that they barely touch what's onscreen. Ken Loach, an old-line social realist, years ago made studies of English working-class life, "Poor Cow" and "Kes," that were well received here, but, in recent times, his earnestness has worked as a damper. He had become so serious a man that you felt abashed if you saw his movies, guilty if you skipped them. Yet "The Wind That Shakes the Barley" (the prolix title comes from an old Irish revolutionary song) is a beautifully realized work and perhaps Loach's best film. He and the cinematographer Barry Ackroyd have produced a slightly dark, saturated color palette that preserves the raw dampness of the Irish weather, the even gray light, the flintiness of the stone cottages. The hilly landscapes are lovely without being picturesque (none of that travel-ad Irish green); the interiors are illuminated by natural light seeping through the windows, without the usual artificial "fill" that pulls faces, or corners of rooms, out of the shadows.



Cillian Murphy and Pádraic Delaney in Ken Loach's movie about Irish rebellion.

BARRY BLITT

What Loach has produced, working with a script by Paul Laverty, is an anti-spectacular spectacle: the British military cars, tin lizzies carrying men in the open, are almost comically antique and vulnerable; the I.R.A. rebels, who wear awkward long coats and caps as they scramble over a hill, look less like a guerrilla force than like fellows who had planned to go shopping with their families but somehow got sidetracked into a bizarre adventure. The movie's power derives from what can only be called under-staging. When the Black and Tans storm into the yard of a Republican family, they line the young men up against a wall; the English soldiers are contemptuous of the Irish—they think they *know* these people, these troublemakers, and they treat them with coarse intimacy. Yet the brutality has an oddly spasmodic, unpatterned feeling: one soldier may be nearly insane with rage while the others stand around blank-faced, not sure how they should behave. The young Irish men are sullenly silent, too, as their mothers and sisters lunge distractedly toward them to protect them, then get shoved out of the way by the soldiers. Loach isn't trying for gracefulness or even clarity; he's trying for his own kind of scrappy truthfulness in which pent-up physical violence bursts out clumsily. Loach's violence doesn't have the stylized glamour of classic movie mayhem; it has the look of surprise.

Cillian Murphy, with his full lips and fine-boned face—he was the charming, sinister seducer in the neat little thriller "Red Eye" and the sweet cross-dresser in "Breakfast on Pluto"—might seem to be an odd choice for a revolutionary, but the point about Damien is that he's a mild man who has been groomed for a refined life (as a London doctor), only to get dragged into war. Murphy is normally very quiet in movies; he has attained his mystique as an actor by staring at people with baby-blue eyes. In this film, too, he has, at times, a deep stillness, but he has idiosyncratic moments as well, such as when Damien has to execute a teen-ager who has ratted on the I.R.A. Murphy, writhing, shoots the boy and stumbles away, nausea struggling against duty. The rest of Loach's actors, however, don't engage the camera with their eyes, which is generally how performers bring attention to themselves in movies. Instead, heads down, they stick to the clandestine business at hand, delivering messages, arguing in late-night meetings, hurtling through barely lit corridors. It's an exciting film, but Laverty and Loach demonstrate again and again that revolutionary violence, with its demand for internal discipline and purity, is inherently tragic. In the end, Damien can't accept the Anglo-Irish compromise because he's committed acts, such as killing the boy, that would become meaningless if he lessened the absoluteness of his goals. That he's wrong, or that his brother is wrong to threaten him with execution, isn't really the issue: the inexorability of the revolutionary process has caught both of them in its spiralling steel coils. Revising my statement of what "The Wind That Shakes the Barley" is about, I would say that it's a sombrely beautiful dream of the violent Irish past. Refusing the standard flourishes of Irish wildness or lyricism, Loach has made a film for our moment, a time of bewildering internecine warfare.

The great film critic Manny Farber once praised what he called "termite art," by which he meant the kind of small, stubborn movie that chews its way through a narrow piece of turf. David Fincher's "Zodiac" is mollusk art: the movie keeps elaborating itself out of its own discharge, hardening its emotions, anxieties, and energies into a shell of obsession. Fincher, working with a fantastically detailed script by the young James Vanderbilt, chronicles the case of the self-identified Zodiac killer, a taunting, publicity-mad creep who murdered at least five people in the San Francisco Bay area in the late nineteen-sixties and sent confessional notes about the crimes (sometimes in code) to newspapers. Fincher puts two of the murders right near the beginning of the movie, both of them as sustained in their terror as anything he did in his notorious serial-killer movie, "Se7en" (1995), which featured deliquescing corpses. But then, astonishingly, "Zodiac" becomes not another thriller or horror show but a multifaceted procedural that divides its narrative attention between the Police Department, where two hardworking cops (Anthony Edwards and Mark Ruffalo) keep coming up with false leads, and the San Francisco *Chronicle*, where an ace crime reporter, Paul Avery (Robert Downey, Jr.), and the newspaper's cartoonist, Robert Graysmith (Jake Gyllenhaal), who has a talent for puzzles, devote their lives to the search for the killer. Moving swiftly, but with precise attention to the emotional coloring of such things as weather and light and dour institutional spaces, Fincher runs through interrogations, trips to the library, the sorting and matching of mounds of evidence. Fincher has changed direction. The creator of the nutty, sub-fascist "Fight Club" and the dumb fright movie "Panic Room" has suddenly devoted himself to (of all things) manners and jurisdictional niceties—the way people talk to one another in a newspaper office, the hassles over evidence between the police of one city and those of another. He has discovered the everyday working world, and he's fascinated by its moods and small tensions, its endless give-and-take.

"Zodiac" is superbly made, but it's also a strange piece of work. As the bad tips and the dubious suspects pile up, one Zodiac investigator after another, devoured by the hunt or merely bored, leaves the case or retires. Only Graysmith, whose two books about Zodiac served as the basis for the picture, keeps going, but he brings his kids into the investigation and breaks up his marriage, and comes off as a selfish nut. As "Zodiac" goes on and on, and it becomes clear that no dénouement is possible (the crime was never solved), we have to ask what the reason for all this cinematic blind-alleying might be. Any honest neurotic could probably tell you: the emotional payoff of an obsession is not attaining some longed-for goal—it's the obsession itself, which fulfills certain needs. If it didn't, it wouldn't be an obsession. Graysmith, whom no one takes seriously at first, wants to prove himself as a sleuth, perhaps, but his real need is to be absorbed in the search. For Fincher, I would guess, the identity of the killer is less important than the vast effort of almost (but not quite) finding him. He teaches us—and we absorb the lesson uneasily—that truth, like some vision that recedes as we draw near it, will never quite yield to our most ardent pursuit. ♦

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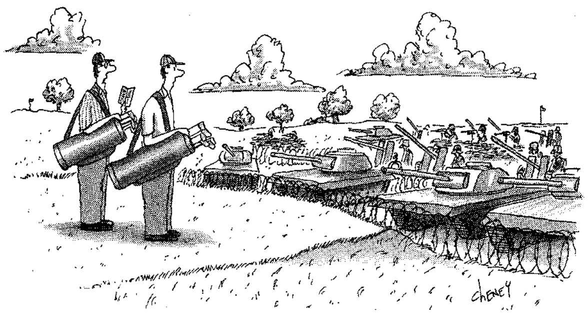
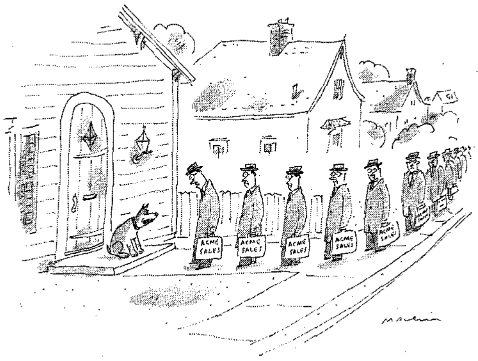
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Christopher Weyant, must be received by Sunday, March 18th. Finalists in the March 5th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the April 2nd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I support our troops as much as the next guy, but do we have to let them play through?"
Charlie Freund, Glendale, Calif.



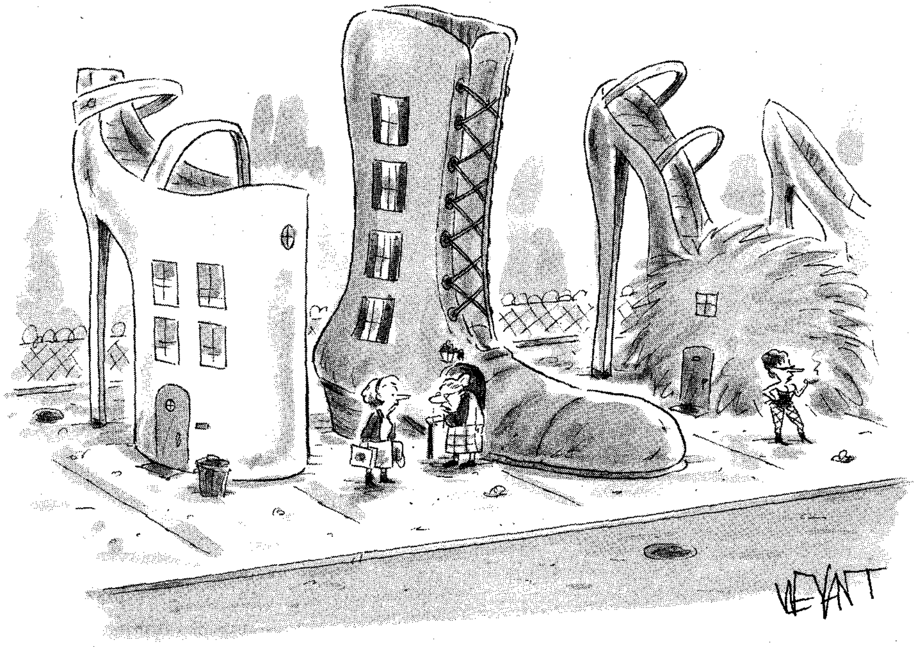
THE FINALISTS

"Are you sure Mr. Coyote left no forwarding address? This is going to be quite a blow to our sales team."
John Bunyan, Cincinnati, Ohio

"I'd like to talk to you about a unique opportunity."
Kim Pelkey, Philadelphia, Pa.

"You don't scare me. I come from a long line of salesmen."
Mike Ford, Brick, N.J.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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—**Curtis Sittenfeld**, author of *Prep*

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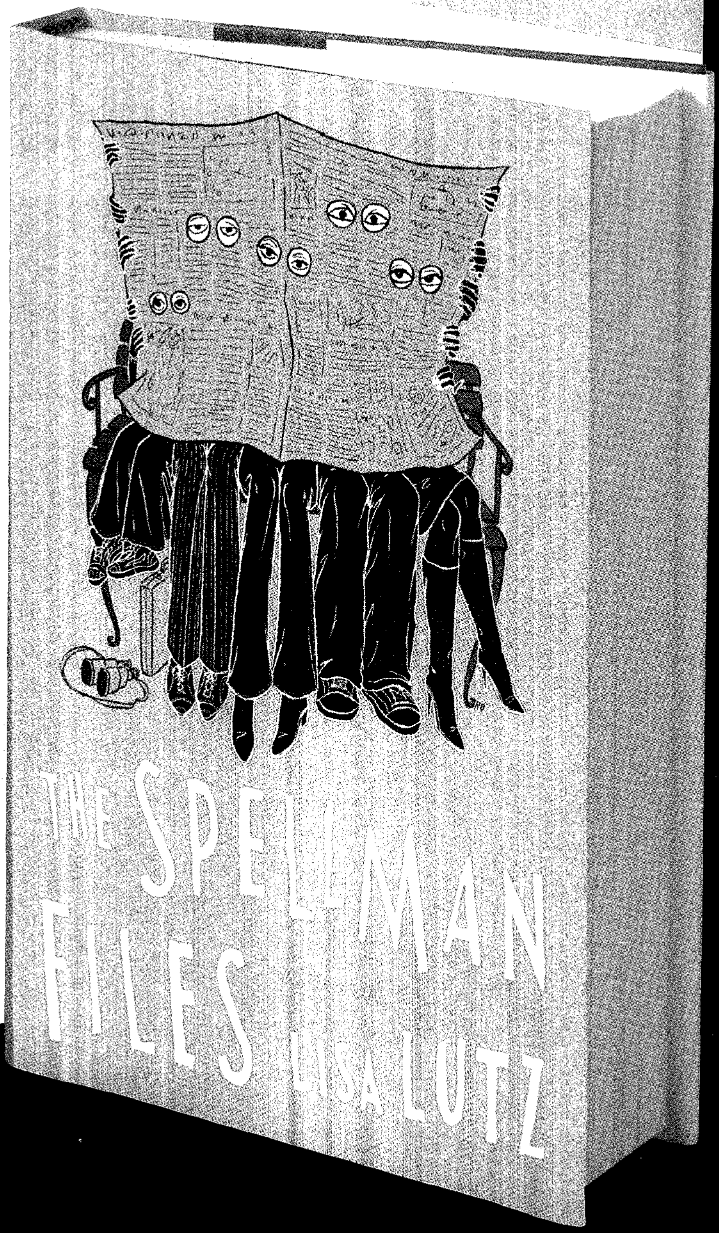
—**Adriana Trigiani**, author of *Big Stone Gap*

"The funniest book I've read in years... My enjoyment of *The Spellman Files* was only slightly undercut by my irritation that I hadn't written it myself."
—**Lauren Weisberger**, author of *The Devil Wears Prada*



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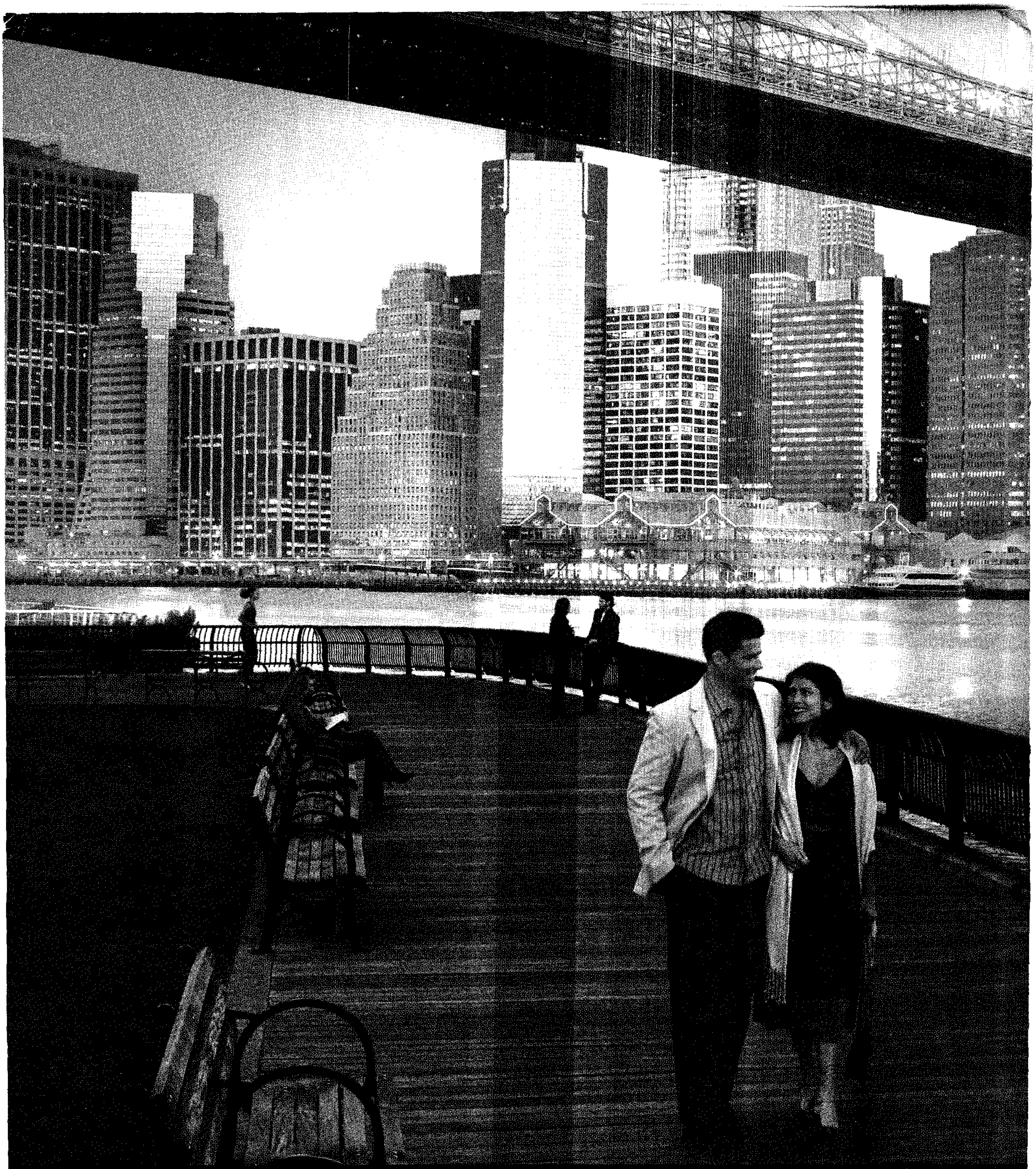

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